

JNANA SUDHA

(Nectar of Knowledge)

THE HIDDEN ESSENCE OF VEDANTA

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SWAMI POORNANANDA TIRTHA

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JNANA SUDHA

What is spiritual experience?

What is religion?

What is reality?

What is meditation?

A close and intelligent perusal of the pages of this book should answer these and many other questions.

Swami Poornananda Tirtha is one of those rare clear-minded sannyasins gifted with the capacity to explain in lucid and understandable language the truth contained in the most subtle of all sciences, "Vedanta". This book should prove to be a boon to everyone, particularly to those spiritual aspirants whose quest has reached a dead end and again for those sincere souls who want to set their foot freshly on the Vedantic path.

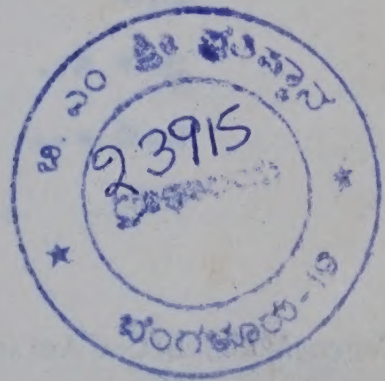
The Bombay Yajna Committee.

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(Nectar of Knowledge)

THE HIDDEN ESSENCE OF VEDANTA

John A. ...
Amarant



SWAMI POORNANANDA

First Impression, May, 1964

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FOREWORD

This is an extraordinary book which contains the talks of Swami Poornananda Tirtha at the Indian Gymkhana Grounds, Bombay, during November-December, 1962. This is a direct talk on the hidden truths of Vedanta. Herein, the way for the highest realisation and the noblest spiritual experience and enlightenment is candidly presented. Those of us, who had the experience while hearing the Swamiji, know for certain, that the readers of this volume will also have the same. Swamiji's talks were then tape-recorded, which has given birth to this volume.

For the inquisitive neophytes who want to be initiated into practical Vedanta and also scholars who want to clarify their doubts and have a correct comprehension of the practical aspects of Jnana and climb up the ladder of realisation, this book will be an invaluable asset.

The Balaramans, a devoted and unassuming couple, whose life is flavoured with the essence of Vedanta, came forward unexpectedly and completed the gigantic task of transcribing the lectures. In this reproduction they have retained the original fragrance of Swamiji's words.

These lectures will clarify the subtle truths of Vedanta, while presenting the Jnana technique to outlive our miseries and to live in joy, joy, joy and joy.

Bombay,

1st January, 1964. }

Gita Yajna Committee

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

This second edition of JNANA SUDHA is a completely revised and somewhat enlarged reproduction of the first edition and is published under the direct supervision of the author and the other sannyasins of the Asram. The first edition was sold out in an exceptionally short time after its publication. Demand for the book has been growing much from the public since then and this has necessitated this second edition.

To facilitate those readers who cannot read Sanskrit verses in Devanagari script, transliteration of all the verses has been added just after each and every quotation.

A new chapter (No. 18) has been added to the book under the heading "WHAT LEADS TO MUKTI?" This explains the *Pravritti* and *Nivritti Dharmas*.

May this edition be of help to the seekers of *Atma-jnana* and the inquisitive students of Vedanta, who want to know the practical side of the great Rishi-science of Bharatvarsha.

Jnana Asram, Parlikad, }
20th November, 1965, }

Publishers

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

When I was about to start for Bombay, I received an express letter from the organisers saying: “We are in a fix. Everyone here is occupied and preoccupied in mind about the Chinese invasion. Will they be receptive enough to such a series of lectures? Shall we postpone it?” and so on. I replied them immediately, quoting a verse by Bhartrihari—

प्रारभ्यते न खलु विघ्नभयेन नीचैः
प्रारभ्य विघ्नविहता विरमन्ति मध्याः ।
विघ्नैः पुनः पुनरपि प्रतिहन्यमानाः
प्रारब्धमुत्तमजना न परित्यजन्ति ॥

*Praarabhyate na khalu vighnabhayena neechaih,
Praarabhya vighnavihataa viramanti madhyaah,
Vighnaih punah punarapi pratihanyamaanaah,
Praarabdhamuttamajanaa na parityajanti.*

The meaning is: There are three grades of people in this world—the lowest, the middle and the best. The lowest type of men, fearing they will meet with difficulties and obstructions on the way, do not start any work at all. They are afraid even to start doing anything. They just keep quiet, brooding. Slightly better are the

type who start an undertaking but when they meet with some difficulties, leave the work for good. They have not strength enough to overcome the obstacles. Thereafter they blame their planets. But the best type of men, once having started something, never leave it till it is satisfactorily finished, even though they are assaulted again and again by difficulties. Let us be examples of the best grade. Especially when we are after a noble enterprise as this, the sooner it is started the better it will be. Even if anything is lacking, the Divine Power will provide it. Be sure, be definite about it. Let us, therefore, go ahead. Take the Gita itself. It was not given out at a time of peace. It was given out by Lord Krishna on the battle field, when both the mighty armies had arrayed themselves, ready to start the war and the first arrow was about to be shot. That being the case, this seems to me not only the opportune time, but the most appropriate time to start these discourses.

Among the *dhyana slokas* I quoted the following:—

यं शैवाः समुपासते शिव इति ब्रह्मेति वेदान्तिनो
 बौद्धाः बुद्ध इति प्रमाणपटवः कर्तेति नैयायिकाः ।
 अर्हन्नित्यथ जैनशासनरताः कर्मेति मीमांसकाः
 सोयं वो विदधातु वाञ्छितफलं त्रैलोक्यनाथो हरिः ॥

*Yam saivaah samupaasate siva iti brahmeti vedantino,
 Bauddhaah buddha iti pramaanapatavah karteti naiyaayikaah,
 Arhannityatha jainasaasanarataah karmeti meemaamsakaah,
 Soyam vo vidadhaatu vaanchhitaphalam trailokyanaatho harih.*

I would like to say a few words explaining it. This *sloka* was found inscribed on a pillar belonging to the

Vijayanagaram period. This *sloka* is also seen in *Hanumannataka* of Hanumat Kavi. There was at that time a great sage, a great realised soul, Vidyaranya (known as Madhavacharya in his *purvasrama*). He was the Prime Minister of the Vijayanagaram empire. It was then that the Muslim invaders started slowly infiltrating from the north. Slowly they increased in numbers, started pillaging, looting and destroying Hindu temples. Vidyaranya realised that the cause for the retrogression of the Hindus and their inability to resist the Muslims was that, though there were numerous individually great realised souls and men of great learning, Hinduism as an institution was very weak. There was no organised society to bring the people together in a united effort. There were so many religious sects and factions, each fighting the others, that they could not stabilise the unity of the Hindus. In order to remove this disunity which was the cause of their weakness, he wanted to lift the people, as a whole, up to a higher plane of understanding and unity, by making them realise the underlying unity of the various sects of Hinduism. Not only this, he aimed at making them realise that not only the various schools of thought of Hinduism but even the so-called different religions—Buddhism, Jainism etc.—had the same Infinite Reality as their basis.

The above *sloka* presents the idea—Oh! Saivites, you are fighting in the name of Siva; Vaishnavites, you are fighting in the name of Vishnu; Buddhists, you are fighting in the name of Buddha etc. But where is the need for these fights? What the Saivites indicate by the term Siva, what the Vaishnavites indicate by the term Vishnu, what the Buddhists term as Buddha etc. are one and

the same Reality. The Truth underlying all these names is the same Infinite, Pure Consciousness. So why are you fighting? One and the same woman is called by her name by her husband, as mother by her son, as aunt by her niece, as sister by her brother and as daughter by her father. Does it mean there are five different persons? No. They are just different names of the same person. So also the same Supreme Reality is called by different sects and religions by different names. Why fight on that account?

Thus reasoning and arguing, Vidyaranya united the people under Vedanta and built a strong empire, able to withstand the enemies. So also, what we need at this critical time is only sustained, persistent, united and intelligent effort. For that we must be shown a way of action.

Even Arjuna, such a mighty warrior as he was, was overcome with a feeling of helplessness on the battlefield. The great bow Gandiva, which none other than he could lift up, slipped from his hands, his skin was burning, his mouth was parched and his mind and intellect ebbed into impotency. At moments of crisis, mere physical prowess, without a proper spiritual knowledge to back it up, is useless. And spiritual knowledge possessed by individuals will alone not do, unless there is an organised society to absorb, assimilate and practise it. The society can be perfect only when it is built on the foundation of the eternal laws of *sanatana dharma*. Any other type of society is doomed. The so-called capitalism, communism, socialism and other 'isms' are only the children of the parent 'ism' namely 'egotism' or 'egoism'.

Arjuna was a man of unequalled prowess and also well versed in the ritualistic religion of those times. All he wanted was happiness while living on this earth and *swarga* (heaven) after death. To his cost he found that none of the physical feats he had learnt and the religious austerities he had observed, gave him the necessary balance of mind at the crucial time when he was face to face with the dilemma of having to fight with his own kith and kin.

On my way to Bombay, I happened to travel with a soldier on his way to NEFA. I asked him: "What is the requisite for winning a war; what is it that is most important?"

He replied: "Neither physical strength nor even military equipment, though these are necessary, but it is brains that win a war." That is true in any crisis. The needed equipoise and balance of mind can be had only through proper Vedantic knowledge and *viveka* (discriminative intellect). That is what Arjuna was lacking then and what we are lacking now. We are confused, occupied and preoccupied. When we fight with a clear conscience and with the full conviction that we are in the right, we shall win.

A word now about what our mutual attitude should be in these discourses. Do not think that Swamiji is lecturing and you are listening. I am *not* lecturing. We are just thinking together. I am doing the thinking loudly and you are doing it silently. Our attitude should be to think calmly together and arrive at the Truth. There is an Upanishadic prayer, *santi patha*, chanted by the teacher and the pupil, *guru* and *sisya*, before starting their daily lessons.

सह नाववतु । सह नौ भुनक्तु ।
 सह वीर्यं करवावहै । तेजस्वि नावधीतमस्तु ।
 मा विद्विषावहै । ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ॥

*Saha naavavatu; saha nau bhunaktu;
 Saha veeryam karavaavahai; tejasvi naavadheetamastu;
 Maa vidvishaavahai; Om Saantih, Saantih, Saantih.*

“May He protect us both. May He nourish us with bliss of Knowledge. Let us exert together with energy. May what we study be well studied. May we not quarrel. *Om, Peace, Peace, Peace!*”

The ultimate thing is always Peace, Peace, Peace. We are discussing Vedanta for acquiring *santi*—peace, calmness, tranquillity and inner joy. My request to you all is:

Please come with a clean and clear mind. Do not come with preconceived notions about the subject. I have not come here to show off my intellectual capacity or learning. I come here with all sincerity to tell you whatever little I know in this vast field and whatever I tell you comes from first-hand experience. I am perfectly sure about this fact that, if you come here with an open mind, listen, think, assimilate and live your convictions, you can attain the Supreme Bliss. Be absolutely sure about it. This is the way the great seers have realised and, in a small measure, I have been able to realise.

Some of the things I tell you may sound revolutionary. But they are not really so. They only seem to be so. I am only stating the old truths. Seemingly, they may contradict some of the prevailing notions you have about our religion. But do not get upset. Think calmly

and quietly without prejudice. Now let us start thinking together.

Just reflect: What is life?

Bhartrihari says in a *sloka*:

आयुर्वर्षशतं नृणां परिमितं रात्रौ तदर्धं गतम्
तस्यार्धस्य परस्य चार्धमपरं बालत्ववृद्धत्वयोः ।
शेषं व्याधिवियोगदुःखसहितं सेवादिभिर्नीयते
जीवे वारितरंगबुद्बुदसमे सौख्यं कुतः प्राणिनाम् ॥

*Aayurvarshasatam nrinaam parimitam
raatrau tadardham gatam,
Tasyaardhasya parasya chaardhamaparam
baalatvavriddhatvayoh,
Sesham vyaadhiviyogadukkkhasahitam
sevaadibhirneeeyate,
Jeeve vaaritarangabudbudasame
saukhyam kutah praaninaam.*

A man's span of life, theoretically, is a hundred years. In these hundred years almost fifty are spent uselessly—without use to himself or to the society—in sleep. So, only fifty years are left to him to make something of his life; to be of some good to the world. But of these fifty years, almost half is spent in old age and childhood, in both of which states he is dependent on others even for the ordinary necessities of life. What is left now is only twentyfive years. This too, is ridden with disease, sorrow of separation, other anxieties and miseries. Also a major part of this time is spent in working (serving others) for one's livelihood. People work because they have to and

not because they like to. They serve others expecting that they will be served in return. So the time to do something fruitful, something tangible in this life is almost nil for those who are stuck up in such life. Life is transient like lightning or the bubbles in the ocean. No one can say when a bubble will burst. Even so, no one can say when this body will perish. There is no fixity in life. As life itself is transient, man will always be fearing death. With all these fears, sorrows, anxieties and afflictions, is there any time left in a man's life when he can be said to be really happy? Is it possible for him to be happy? Think. It is anybody's experience. We have then to freshly evaluate our life. Vedanta says at this point:

Everything in this world is transient, ephemeral, fleeting. Nothing in this worldly life is permanent. And everyone, nay, every living organism in this world, is only after unalloyed, unpolluted, permanent *ananda*, joy. People marry, people study, people get jobs—all for what? Because they think that by so doing they will be happy. All actions, by everyone in this world, is just to get more joy. But all these joys depend on external things for their fulfilment and all these external objects and things being themselves transient and ephemeral, can the joys they give ever be permanent? The joy that is had from transient, ephemeral things must necessarily be transient, ephemeral.

Don't let your mind be extrovert. If you are looking for permanent joy from the outside world you are in for disappointment. For you can never order your surroundings to your liking. Instead, realise that the fountain-head of joy is within you. There is an unexplored treasure

of pure joy within everyone. Everyone has it. You can realise it here and now. It is for anyone and everyone. Seek it, aspire for it, realise it. You have not to go seeking it to distant places, nor have you to wait for it. Seek it here and now and you shall find it.

इह चेदवेदीदथ सत्यमस्ति

न चेदिहावेदीन्महती विनष्टिः ।

Iha chedavedeedatha satyamasti,

Na chedihaavedeenmahatee vinashtih.

If you realise it here and now, yours is the infinite gain; for you are one with Truth and if you do not strive after it, equally great is your loss. Use your *paurusha*, will-power. The Gita gives practical suggestions to improve your inner life and bring it to the highest fulfilment. Do not depend upon others. Then invariably you are caught in the web of subject, object and their relation—*triputi*. Do not look outside, but look within, for, there is the fountain-head of all joy. Some might wonder: “Is this possible amidst worldly surroundings?” Yes, it is possible. We have to keep on working physically in this world. There is a *sloka* in the Gita:

न हि कश्चित् क्षणमपि जातु तिष्ठत्यकर्मकृत् ।

कार्यते ह्यवशः कर्म सर्वः प्रकृतिजैर्गुणैः ॥

Na hi kaschit kshanamapi jaatu tishthatyakarmakrit,

Kaaryate hyavasah karma sarvah prakritijairgunaih.

We cannot remain without action even for a second. Action does not mean only our external activities. Eating, breathing and even thinking are activities. We cannot

live even for a short time without some of these activities. Complete inactivity is impossible. It is only *how* we act that matters and not *what* we do. There are lots of fake *sannyasins*, who, dissatisfied with life, take to *sannyasa*. They are not real *sannyasins*. They are trying to escape a field for which they have acquired a dislike. That is not right. Only our attitude to action, the feeling or idea that we can acquire joy from the fruits of our actions, must change. *Jivanmukti* is not incompatible with worldly life. Vedanta can be practised in the work-a-day world, in our hand-to-mouth existence. We cannot do without it. Saturate your actions with and soak them in Vedanta. Hear these lectures, ponder over them, assimilate them, live them and before long you will become one with the Infinite. No doubt about it.

In these lectures you will be shown how to put Vedanta into practice. The Gita is not just a theory. We shall dive deep into it and the right path will open up before us. These truths were brought by Krishna from the forest universities of the ancient *rishis* into the everyday life of the worldly man. When the truths were misunderstood and misinterpreted by the pundits, it was again brought back to its pristine glory by the great Sankaracharya. Sankara proclaimed that the Gita and Upanishads are not just of speculative scriptural value alone, just to be read, but their teachings have also got to be lived. The Gita gives a psychological process for ridding ourselves of the dirt that has accumulated in our hearts. It says again and again: "Turn within and seek the source of joy." The more and more you do this the happier and happier will you be. The process is not at all difficult and it becomes easier as you proceed on the

path. Success will surely be yours. Anybody can attain *Jivanmukti*. Whichever walk of life you are in, an office employee, a businessman or a menial worker, whether young or old, whether sick or healthy, *Jivanmukti* is within the reach of you all. The body may be old or sick, but the mind is always young and healthy. The mind may be weary, but the Inner Perceiver is never tired or weary. It is ever the same Infinite Pure Consciousness. Seeking the Supreme is a subtle, inward process. There is a large piece of stone and a small needle lying on the ground and you are asked to find and lift them up. Finding out the large piece of stone is very easy, but to lift it you require to do a lot of exertion, whereas finding the needle requires a torch and a lot of application. But once found, it is very easy to lift it. Similarly the Vedanta-process of sublimating ourselves requires more of application than of exertion. The difficulty is, people are not prepared to apply themselves to this search. Once you start in right earnest and with determination, the path becomes easier and easier.

It is just a matter of giving a complete turn to the direction of the mind. If you can think you are a man, it is equally easy for you to think that you are the eternal Immortal Soul. If you can think you are an ignorant fool, it is equally easy for you to think that you are verily the Knowledge Absolute. I am not here to call you all *papins*, sinners, and prophesy doom for you. I want to make you all recognise and realise that you are all sinless and taintless, the ever pure, eternal, Immortal Soul, the *satchidananda*—nothing less.

May you all realise It! The life of Vedanta is a life of constant control over our senses, mind and intellect.

It is a process of continuously improving oneself. You might think: "What is the use of improving myself? The world will still be the same as now, full of misery, selfishness and the other evils of society." That attitude and argument are wrong. Try it out for yourself and you will see. Improve yourself first, then the others immediately around you will also slowly improve. The greater your inner purity, the wider will this circle of your good influence grow. Be absolutely certain about it. A man of purity radiates a glow around him and those coming under the sphere of this glow are sure to improve. In a family, if the father improves, gradually the mother and the children improve. If the son improves, it will have the same influence on his parents. This is the eternal law of nature. Let each husband teach Vedanta to his wife in this very life and let each wife lead her husband and children through Vedanta to *Mukti*.

Chapter 2

VEDANTA

The questions with which Vedanta is concerned are: "How are we to get real, abiding *sukha*? How are we to adjust ourselves to and get mastery over circumstances which seem to be bothering us always? How are we to act in the world?" Vedanta gives the answer to all these questions. A thorough knowledge of Vedanta is necessary first and all our ways of action have to be rebuilt on that knowledge, if we are to have *ananda*. I take it that you are all eager to get *santi* and *ananda*, peace and joy. Then Vedanta is the anchor for you. You have to understand it and regulate and direct your life accordingly.

The question is often raised: "Is Vedanta for a recluse or for an ordinary worldly man, who has to cope with his worries and anxieties and is leading a hand-to-mouth existence? Are we not to mind our every day activities if we take up Vedanta?" Vedanta says: "It is as much for the worldly man as for anybody else. You have only to understand that what you call life and what you take to be real—this mundane life—is nothing but a fractional expression of that infinite *Brahman*, *satchid-ananda*."

If you want real joy in this mundane existence, you must start by considering yourself to be a fraction of that infinite manifestation. You have to ascend higher

from the normal ideas and conceptions you have about the world and life.

This life, which is visible and tangible, *vyakta*, is but a projection, sprout or manifestation of something that is *avyakta*, unmanifest, intangible and invisible. Now if we do not know anything pertaining to the *avyakta* part of life, which is its source, we cannot correctly assess and regulate the *vyakta* part, our everyday life as we know it.

A man whom you do not know comes and says: "I am Krishna." Merely by that *vyakta* part of him, that is, what you are able to see for yourself, you cannot assess or judge him. You have first to gather all pertinent information about him; what he is, where he is employed, whose son he is, and so on, before you feel you know anything about him. You have to know the *avyakta* part of his history, if you are to correctly judge his *vyakta* part.

How many people there are, who at their old age, do not say with regret: "My life is wasted, it was dry and dreary. I did not have even a moment of real peace."

This invariably is the fate of every man who concerns himself solely with the *vyakta* part throughout his life. Do not be like that. Look at things with the torch of Vedanta and make a correct assessment. There is no need to go away, leaving the society. A true Vedantin is as much at home in the society, in the busy world, as is a mundane man. Wherever you are, you can *live* Vedanta.

Some people running away from life say: "The world is useless. It is unreal." Vedanta does not say so.

According to it, the world is unreal as world, but real as *Brahman*. “That the world is real and is all in all” is unreal. If I mistake a rope for a snake, the snake-understanding is unreal, *mithyajnana*, the rope-understanding is real. There are different toys made of clay: an elephant, a dog, a tiger, and so on. If you understand them to be real animals and are terrified by them, it is *mithyajnana*—wrong understanding. The doll understood as tiger is unreal; understood as clay is real. When the clay-understanding dawns, the tiger-understanding goes away. So also, everything is verily *Brahman*. But, upon *Brahman*, by misunderstanding we superimpose the world. That is *mithyajnana*; not that the world is unreal and *sunya*.

Now try to understand. That clay tiger has not only the inherent character to make itself understood by you as a tiger, but it has also the capacity to make you know it to be merely a clay doll; that is, it has the inherent capacity to create misunderstanding in you, and also to remove that misunderstanding, delusion. For an *ajnani* (ignorant man) this world has caused the *mithyajnana* that it is real as world. For a man who wants *Brahma jnana*, the very same world removes that delusion and makes him understand that the world is real only as *Brahman*.

There is a wonderful *sloka* in the Bhagavata, the very first one in it, giving this idea:

जन्माद्यस्य यतोऽन्वयादितरतश्चार्थेष्वभिज्ञः स्वराट्
 तेने ब्रह्म हृदा य आदिकवये मुह्यन्ति यत् सूरयः ।
 तेजोवारिमृदां यथा विनिमयो यत्र त्रिसर्गोऽमृषा
 धाम्ना स्वैन सदा निरस्तकुहकं सत्यं परं धीमहि ॥

*Janmaadyasya yatonvayaaditarata-
 schartheshu abhijnah svaraata,
 Tene brahma hridaa ya aadikavaye
 muhyanti yat soorayah,
 Tejovaarimridaam yathaa vinimayo
 yatra trisargomrishaah,
 Dhaamnaa svena sadaa nirastakuhakam
 satyam param dheemahi.*

Our ordinary pundits do not give its real meaning. They will say: “*Gayatri* is contained in it. Merely repeat it. *Bhagawan* will shower His blessings on you.” But its whole worth is in its meaning. It says: “That Infinite Reality from which this world has originated, that from which the world has its emanation and in which it will have its dissolution, that ultimate principle in which everything has its existence, has the capacity to create the misunderstanding (*ajnana*) in you that the world you live in is intensely real, and by its selfsame glory, it can also remove your misunderstanding and lead you to the real state of it, that is *Brahman*.”

A man loves his wife. She is all in all to him. Suddenly she dies. This can affect him in two ways:

(i) He can think: “I have lost everything. It is not worthwhile living.” The wife had the capacity to lead him to the mistaken notion that she was indispensable to him and make him despair of ever being happy again.

(ii) He can think: “That entity, which I had all along been thinking as real, has betrayed me. Instead of pivoting my life on something transient and impermanent. I must go to that Reality which will never betray

me. I must not depend on anything ephemeral to give me joy, for that joy can only be fleeting and unreal. Only something permanent can give me permanent joy." So the same wife can also be instrumental in removing his misunderstanding. This example illustrates the meaning of the above *sloka*, in part.

Bhartrihari at the end of his three *satakas* prostrates to the five elements and says: "I was attached to you and the things born out of you, but this very attachment through its attendant misery taught me also to be detached. The more I was attached to you, the more you betrayed me. That did not brutalise me but instead sublimated me. Because of these shocks, I realised that my association with you will cause me only misery. Oh! You are my *gurus*. By your grace all my *ajnana* and *moha* (delusion born of ignorance) are gone. Now I realise that I am not part and parcel of this perishable world, *prapancha*. I am one with the infinite *Brahman*. From an *ajnani* you have changed me into a *jnani*. I prostrate to you again and again." As in the case of Bhartrihari, any experience in the world should point out to us the ephemeral, fleeting nature of the things of the world and direct us on to the path of Vedanta, by which alone we can have abiding peace and joy. The world is bad for the *ajnanis*, for they are caught up by it and pulled down; but for the *janis* it is good, for it raises them higher to the divine stature. When we analyse it, the world is a blessing because it says at every turn: "Don't come this way. You cannot get permanent peace here" and makes us turn in the opposite direction—that of Vedanta. The world is a blessing in disguise. Can you recognise this?

At night you mistake a sign-post for a ghost. The misunderstanding will be removed if you take a torch, go to it and investigate. The very same ghost reveals itself to be nothing but the sign-post. Similarly the world also makes you misunderstand it. It deceives you. Enquire into it, investigate it and the misunderstanding will be removed. The world is an infinitesimal part of the infinite *Brahman*. It is a fraction of the dynamic aspect of the Supreme Reality. This truth you will never realise, as long as you keep on thinking that the world is everything for you. Vedanta demands of you a critical approach, an analysing and probing attitude. Unless you have this, you will only be floundering in the world. If you want to realise the Absolute, turning the *mala*, doing *nama-japa* and *pooja* will not suffice. Remember, what I talk is on the authority of Vedanta. Even if you are shocked, it will ultimately prove beneficial. Pulling out an aching tooth creates more pain than the actual tooth-ache. But this pain is short-lived and when it leaves, it takes with it the old ache too. So also here, once you survive the shock, you will get something wonderful. Sankara says in the *Vivekachudamani*:

वैराग्यबोधौ पुरुषस्य पक्षिवत्
 पक्षौ विजानीहि विचक्षण त्वम् ।
 विमुक्तिसौधाग्रतलाधिरोहणं
 ताभ्यां विना नान्यतरेण सिद्ध्यति ॥

Vairaagyabodhau purushasya pakshivat,
Pakshau vijaaneehi vichakshana twam,
Vimuktisaudhaagratalaadhirohanam,
Taabhyaam vinaa naanyatarena siddhyati.

“O man, who pretends to be wise, know that there are only two things in the world which will guide you, be your sheet anchor in life and help you in attaining *Moksha*. They are *viveka* and *vairagya*—discrimination and dispassion. Dispassion is the natural, spontaneous disassociation or unattachment to the objects of the world. Discrimination is the critical analysis of the world to know what is real and what is unreal in it. As the two wings of a bird are indispensable to it for flying, so, for you to fly, to soar high up and escape from the pains of the mundane world, *viveka* and *vairagya* are essential. If you want to get to the top of the mansion called *Mukti*, you cannot do without these twin virtues. Nothing else will be of any avail.” Sankara says this, but we do not care to understand a single word of his. Instead of trying to understand and follow his teachings, we merely worship and do *pooja* to him. Is it not the height of folly?

When you mistake a rope for a snake, it is no use chanting “Rama, Rama”. To remove the misunderstanding, you must take a torch and see what it is. So also to remove the *ajnana* created by the world-show and its *sukhas* and *dukkhas*, you have to take the torch of Vedanta and investigate. *Nama-japa* and *pooja* bestow at best a sort of discipline. But they will be of no avail, if you want to remove *ajnana* and attain *Moksha*. The process is one of conscious understanding and not of ritual-performance. It should be a conscious development and not a blind mechanical action. It is possible for you to develop *viveka* and *vairagya*. All you must do is to reason: “I have *sukha* and *dukkha* now. I must remove them. To do that I must follow this method.” Each and every one who cares to know Vedanta, can do so and go

to the ultimate Truth. Once you reach the goal, attain *Brahmajnana*, you will realise that you could have gladly sacrificed even a hundred million births for the state of bliss you have attained. Even a little of this *Brahmajnana* makes you bubble up with joy and you feel like sharing that *ananda* with everyone. Will a mother who has a rare fruit eat it without sharing it with her children? So also, when you have imbibed even a small amount of practical Vedanta, you feel like broadcasting it to the whole world. Try to understand and put it into practice. It is our ancient wisdom and is much more our heritage and birthright than our ancestral property. It is like a hidden treasure that is kept very close to us; yet we do not know it. Once we open up that treasure chest, we will jump and dance with joy. It is our heritage; we who are *Sanatana Dharmis* should strive for it. Without knowing that it is in our own power either to strive and attain it, or to lead a dreary, dry life, we say: "It is my *karma* that I am so miserable. The planets are very unfavourable to me. Nothing seems to work out all right." This is absurd. This *karma*, the planets and the *sirorekha* are only for the *ajnanis*. *Karma* is only the relative explanation of the phenomena of birth and death. As for the planets, these are as inert as the earth. They may, perhaps, influence the body a little. But the mind is so potent, elastic and subtle as to go beyond the operation or influence of the planets, and they cannot affect our minds in the least. The mind actually can be made the master of the world and the planets. Depend not on the planets, but on your own mind, *viveka*. The weapons to cut across the superstitions about the planets, *prarabdha*, etcetera, are *viveka* and *vairagya*. It only needs

jnana and the firm one-pointed determination, *vyavasayatmika buddhi*, on your part: "I will reach that Ultimate Principle, from which this fractional gross aspect called the world has sprouted. I will utilise this very life for that and not wait for uncertain future births. I will utilise this very life which has till now deluded, betrayed, deceived, cheated and troubled me, to get over that illusion. I will realise *Brahman* in this very life." Then you are sure to reach that Infinite Abode, realising which, you will never again return to the *sukhas* and *dukkhas* of everyday mundane life. It will be a state of permanent *santi* and *ananda*, right here and now, and not one promised to you after your death. Post-mortem prospects of a happy heaven or a miserable hell are intended to regulate and discipline the character and conduct of *ajnanis*, deluded people. Once having known Vedanta, remove the ideas of heaven and hell from your head. March headlong to *Mukti*, the beatific state you *will* attain here and now.

May you all awaken to this Reality and realise It!

Chapter 3

SANATANA DHARMA

The Gita

The Bhagavad Gita is the essence of the Upanishads.

The Upanishads were taught by the ancient *rishis* (sages) to their close disciples. The *rishis* did *tapas* (penance) in the forests and attained *Brahmajnana*. They seldom came down to the ordinary people and gave out these truths. Nor did the people of the world care to go and learn at the feet of the *rishis*. So the common people, not knowing Vedanta and the ideal kind of life they must lead, were full of ignorance and attachments. They could not conceive that they can go beyond the ordinary *sukha* and *dukkha* (pleasure and pain), *raga* and *dwesha* (attraction and repulsion) and reach a state of *ananda* (transcendental bliss). It was left to Krishna to go to the forests and learn the *Brahma vidya* (technique of self-realisation) at the feet of Sage Angirasa and then come back to the society to propagate this Eternal Truth. He gave it out not in a theoretical way but in such a practical way that even the ordinary man could understand it, absorb it, assimilate it, and live it. Where he found them apt, Krishna has also quoted with slight adaptations and changes some of the Upanishadic *mantras*. In other verses he has taken the substance from the Upanishads and explained them in a practical way.

I am going to say a few things preliminary to entering into the Gita proper. The second chapter in the Gita contains more or less the whole of the Gita in a condensed form and hence it is very important. In it are discussed what is *dharma*, what is *adharma*, what is *sreyas* (that which bestows lasting good), what is *preyas* (that which gives the good things of the world), what is *karma*, what is *karma yoga*, what is realisation, what are the marks of the man of realisation, and so on. We shall first take up the question of *dharma*. What is *dharma*? We are having pitiable misconceptions as to what it is. People say: "This is my *dharma*." What is generally understood by it? Even a black-marketeer, when asked why he is doing so, says: "It is my *dharma* to protect and look after my wife and children. I am just doing it." According to him it is his *dharma*. He acts according to his pet understanding. He sees nothing wrong in cheating people to support his family. A man observing religious austerities also says: "This *dharma* has been entrusted to me by my father and grandfather. It is my *dharma* to do it." He is also acting according to his understanding. The general idea is, *dharma* is a series of *do's* and *don'ts* enumerated by our *sastras* and scriptures. "Thou shalt do this, thou shalt not do that," and so on.

But what really is *dharma*? *Dharma* is the inherent nature of a thing to express itself. The *dharma* of a mirror is to reflect and throw back an image of the object in front of it. Can a mirror act otherwise? It is its very nature; it cannot act otherwise. So also animals walk on four legs. It is their *dharma*. As for man, his *dharma* is to know and be true to his real, inherent Self, which is infinite, eternal, immortal, all-pervading *satchidananda*.

This, then, is *dharma* in its true aspect. This is what is known as *Sanatana Dharma*, the permanent eternal *dharma*, which sustains mankind. It is not a series of *do's* and *don'ts*. It is just: "Be yourself. Be your true self." This is the *dharma* that sustains the whole universe; this is the *dharma* that can keep mankind away from all miseries and sorrows. This is the *dharma*, knowing and realising which, man is freed from all limitations and he realises: "I am the infinite, all-pervading, immortal, eternal Pure Consciousness." This is the permanent *dharma* on which rests the whole universe. Know it and there is no more sorrow, no more misery for you.

उत्तिष्ठत । जाग्रत । प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत ।

Uttishthata; jaagrata; praapya varaannibodhata!

Arise, awake, realise here and now! Every one of you can do it, whoever you may be, whether you be Hindu, Muslim, Christian, Parsee or Buddhist. Whatever religion he may belong to, everyone can realise it. God has not created these names and creeds. God is nameless and creedless. All these are created by man. Even the very name "God" has been coined by man. Does anybody know the real, original name of God? Nobody knows. So do not stand on names. Realise you are the eternal, immortal Soul. The moment you realise it, your life is fulfilled. The joy, the *ananda*, of that realisation cannot at all be described. Vedanta does not say: "If you do this, you shall attain heaven after death." No. It shows you the way of attaining the permanent supreme *ananda*, here and now, while you are in this very world.

Mankind is only after happiness. Ask anybody: "Why have you married, why have you studied so much, why are you doing this job?" The answer to all these questions is simply that man is after more and more of happiness, *sukha*. But any worldly *sukha* is necessarily accompanied by *dukkha*. There is no getting away from it. If you depend on anything outside you to give you joy, that joy, even if you do get it, will be impermanent. It will surely be followed by *dukkha*. Do not look for joy outside. Look within. There is the fountain-head of eternal, permanent joy within you. This joy, this *ananda*, is yours once you realise what your true *dharma*, true nature, is and live it. Only that supreme *dharma* can give you permanent happiness, permanent *santi*, peace. That is why Krishna says:

सर्वधर्मान् परित्यज्य मामेकं शरणं ब्रज ।

अहं त्वा सर्वपापेभ्यो मोक्षयिष्यामि मा शुचः ॥

*Sarvadharmān parityajya maamekaṁ śaraṇam vraja,
Aham tvā sarvapaapebhyo mokṣayishyāmi maa śucaḥ.*

"Throw away all your worldly (ordinary) *dharmas*. Take refuge in Me (meaning that one Infinite Reality seated in your very heart). That is, take refuge in your own Infinite Self, the all-pervading Reality. Be of good cheer, for once you take refuge there, you are for ever free from all misery and doubt. Realise your true Self."

That highest *dharma* is discussed in the Bhagavata. The popular pundits and *sastris* (those learned in the scriptures), who explain Bhagavata, do not care to interpret the higher truths contained in it. Either they do not know it themselves or they do not want to disclose it.

The second stanza in the Bhagavata says:

धर्मः प्रोज्झितकैतवोऽत्र परमो निर्मत्सराणां सताम्
वेद्यं वास्तवमत्र वस्तु शिवदं तापत्रयोन्मूलनम् ।
श्रीमद्भागवते महामुनिकृते किं वा परैरीश्वरः
सद्यो हृद्यवरुध्यतेऽत्र कृतिभिः शुश्रूषुभिस्तत्क्षणात् ॥

*Dharmah projjhitakaitavotra paramo
nirmatsaraanaam sataam,
Vedyam vaastvamatra vastu sivadam
taapatrayonmoolaanam,
Srimad Bhaagavate mahaamunikrite
kim vaa paraireeswarah,
Sadyo hridyavarudhyatetra kritibhih
susrooshubhih tatkshanaat.*

“O People ! listen to Me. I am going to state the one eternal, glorious, wonderful *dharma*; the *dharma* that never changes, so long as humanity exists; the *dharma* that is not conditioned either by time or space and not the *dharma* of *do's* and *don'ts* that the ordinary books tell us. None can do away with this great *dharma* if one is to get abiding *ananda*. I am stating this *dharma* for those who want *Mukti*, who have got rid of *raga* and *dwesha*, in a certain measure at least. This *dharma* has to be known by them. The moment they know that, they will realise the resplendent bliss.” How can you get it? You have to prepare yourself for it. And how to prepare? Remove all hypocrisy, deceit and duplicity. People say God is all in all to them. Yet they ask God: “O God! give me this, give me that.” Why should we send a separate

application for supplying us with the objects of secular life? If you believe in that Omnipresent, Omnipotent, Omniscient God, then does He not know what we want before our thinking it and uttering anything? Does not a mother know what her child wants? We people do not know what God is. Is it not the utmost height of folly to ask God to give you this and that? Throw away that folly, that ignorance. If you believe in God, surrender completely to Him and do not ask for anything. Make your mind pure. Krishna says:

अनन्याश्चिन्तयन्तो मां ये जनाः पर्युपासते ।

तेषां नित्याभियुक्तानां योगक्षेमं वहाम्यहम् ॥

Ananyaaschintayanto maam ye janaah paryupaasate,

Teshaam nityaabhiyuktaanaam yogakshemam vahaamyaham.

“Those who are devoted to Me and have taken complete refuge in Me, let them not worry. I will look after their *yogakshema*.” Getting things that we do not already have is “*yoga*” and preserving what we already have is “*kshema*”. What Bhagavata, Ramayana, Yogavasishta, Gita and every good book amidst our scriptures teach, is the same Vedanta. We do not know how to understand them, unravel them and go to their essence. On the other hand, we understand from these books only the mere superficial story. So, remove duplicity, take refuge in Him alone. Now-a-days we are steeped in duplicity and hypocrisy. The conventional terms “How are you? I am O.K.” and others are mostly meaningless samples of practical hypocrisy. The same thing prevails in *bhakti* (devotion) also. I am not condemning the highest type of *bhakti*. I am saying this so that those who are

already good *bhaktas* can go higher up and those who are not, can know what real *bhakti* is. The moment we have God, we will not want anything else. This is the only supreme *dharma*.

On the glory of this *dharma* the Bhagavata says: "If you know it, you will have *ananda* and then no more coming back to the world." I am telling you the process. Attain it yourself. The final state cannot be described. The moment you know it, it will remove the *tapatraya*, the three afflictions, from you. *Tapatraya* can be roughly put as poverty, disease and death. So know and work on this eternal *dharma*. Veda Vyasa has written the Bhagavata only to expound this *dharma*. Once this has been understood throw away all lower *dharmas*. The police force is meant only for the thief. It restrains only those persons who disregard law and not the lawful citizens. So also, *do's* and *don'ts* are for those people who are not perfect in themselves. The moment you are determined that you should be perfect, the moment you start purifying yourself, throw away all other *dharmas*. They are not for you. If you can think you are a man, you can also think God is within you. He is nearest and dearest to you. Seek Him within yourself, approach Him directly within you. Do not wait for a few more births. If people want, they can do it. They themselves are at fault if they go on seeking God elsewhere. Neither God nor the *sastras* are to be blamed. If you want to attain perfection, walk that path. Those who are intensely interested in improving themselves and attaining the Superme, even on hearing Vedanta once, will have an understanding, a sort of revelation. They will have a new vision before them. God is not outside. He can be held tightly in

our hearts, *avarudhyate*. Realise that God is within you. Is there any way He can escape from you? Will there be any time of the day throughout your life when you will be out of touch with Him? Those people who want perfection and are interested in hearing these talks must try to understand them. Right after understanding, start putting it into practice. It will not be long before you experience the infinite joy. *Sarvesvara* (God) is within you. Is it not wrong to search for Him outside when He is inside? We call Him *sarvavyapi* (Omnipresent), yet, we search for Him only outside, when He is as much within us as outside. When there is such a wonderful process, when we can reach God directly and right now, why go for lesser things? There is a *sloka* in Kaivalya Navaneetam:

एकान्तसन्निहितमीदृशमात्मतत्त्वम्
 लोका विमूढमतयो बत नाद्रियन्ते ।
 आकाशगोचरमशेषजगत्प्रकाशम्
 घूका न भास्करमुदीक्षितुमुत्सहन्ते ॥

Ekaantasannihitamēedrisam ātmatatvam,
Lokaa vimoodhamatayo bata naadriyante,
Aakaasagocharam aseshajagatprakaasam,
Ghookaa na bhaaskaram udeekshitum utsahante.

This *Atmatatwa* (the science pertaining to the Self), is only one. There is only one such *dharma*. People are trying to get some peace of mind in this world. Are they getting it? Have they got more peace now than when they were born? If they have not, is not their life wasted

and if they are not after peace, are they not fools? They are blocking the only way to open up their wisdom. Such people do not respect Vedanta. Why? Here a simile is given. Owls are considered blind during day. But that is not so. They can see during day, but they fear the glare of the sun and refuse to open their eyes and they believe themselves to be blind. That Sun which illumines the whole world, the owl does not look up and see. The owls alone are to be blamed for that. Similarly, Vedanta is available everywhere, in any book. If we want it, we can get it from many experiences we undergo in this world. But we do not want to know it. If we want, we can get it. It is easy, if we have a mind. Let us not be owls. Let us keep our eyes open to all the wisdom and glory of Vedanta. Let us get into the process by which we can improve ourselves, ennoble ourselves, evolve ourselves and realise the Self. It can be started right now. I am not joking. Hear it. This is what Vedanta says. This is what anyone of realisation would say.

Now let us turn to the Gita. The first verse in the Bhagavad Gita starts with the word “*dharma*”—

धर्मक्षेत्रे कुरुक्षेत्रे समवेता युयुत्सवः ।

मामकाः पाण्डवाश्चैव किमकुर्वत संजय ॥

Dharmakshetre kurukshetre samavetaa yuyutsavah,

Maamakaah paandavaaschaiva kimakurvata Sanjaya.

The literal meaning of this stanza is: Dhritarashtra asks Sanjaya: “O Sanjaya, what did my sons and the Pandavas, arrayed in the sacred field of Kurukshetra, wishing to fight with one another, do?” Everyone explaining this stanza, translates it as a question

by Dhritarashtra to Sanjaya to tell him how each army fared, what turn the battle was taking, who was winning, and the like. That is, Dhritarashtra puts the question wishing to know the details of the battle. But I am going to give you a new interpretation. I have conducted a good deal of research on this and I am going to put before you the inference I have arrived at.

The Bhagavad Gita comes in the Bhishma Parva of the Mahabharata (chapters 25 to 42). Before that, let us take chapter thirteen onwards. There, the Kurukshetra war had just been decided upon. Veda Vyasa tells Dhritarashtra: "O King! you are a blind man. You may be interested in seeing the battle. If you wish, I can give you *divya drishti* (divine power to see) so that you may not miss anything. Do you want it?" Dhritarashtra replies: "I know my children are *adharmis* (unrighteous) and they are doomed to die in this battle. I do not want to witness it. If you want to help me, give Sanjaya *divya drishti*. He is my trusted friend and he will report to me whatever he sees with his divine eyes." So Vyasa gives Sanjaya *divya drishti*. As soon as Sanjaya obtained it, he explains in beautiful terms what all he could see and gather—the frontiers of the then India, the various gushing rivers, the mighty mountains, and so on. He gives a beautiful, graphic description of the country. Then he goes to the battlefield and returns only on the tenth day to report to Dhritarashtra.

Meanwhile, the king is ruminating over the war and how his sons have fared. Sanjaya returns and says: "My prostrations to you, O King! I have to convey to you the news of the death of your grandfather Bhishma. You are indirectly responsible for it." While executing those

crooked plans of his, that is, the game at dice and the eventful exile, Duryodhana knew that the Pandavas would come back and fight with him, and that they, being powerful, would defeat him. Yet he did it. What gave him courage then? He thought: "As long as Bhishma is on our side, we cannot be defeated." "That very Bhishma, depending on whose strength your son went into this war, has been killed. The mighty tree has been uprooted. Bhishma did not deserve this. You are responsible for his death, by your refusal to stop the war. You should have advised Duryodhana to give the Pandavas their rightful share of the kingdom. You were mentally blinded by the mistaken love for your son." Dhritarashtra said: "O Sanjaya! I can never believe it. How could that greatest man of the Kuru dynasty be killed? Anybody hearing this news will crumble down. How did you feel? How were you able to withstand the shock when he was killed? How are you able to talk about his death so calmly? You do not seem to be upset. I am confused and upset even on hearing the news. Who among the Pandavas was responsible for killing the great sire, depending on whom Duryodhana went into the battle? Bhishma was great in every way, physically, mentally, intellectually and spiritually. He never deflected from *dharma*. He was absolutely pure at heart. He was a master of the Vedas and the Vedanta. If he could be killed, can there be any real *dharma* in this world? Has *dharma* any value? Bhishma having fallen, I am absolutely sure, all the other warriors on our side will also be killed." After having spoken thus, Dhritarashtra started introspecting: "If these Pandavas, who apparently are *dharmis*, can kill Bhishma, their own revered grand-sire,

the greatest of *dharmis*, I am sure the world has turned upside down. It does seem that *adharma* is stronger than *dharma*.

“But that cannot be so. Why should I blame the world, the Pandavas or anybody else for his death? However good a man may be, however great, however courageous, however mighty, however gifted or however small, however cowardly or however mean, he has to meet with death; he cannot escape it. It is the eternal law of nature that anything that comes into this world has to pass away from the surface of the world sooner or later. So I have no right to blame anybody.

“Are the Pandavas actually responsible for this war or are my sons responsible for it? Because of their greed, my sons made Bhishma a stooge. Only their insatiable desire sent him to his death. On the other hand, the Pandavas have not perpetrated any crime. They have gone through all the mediatory processes—*sama*, *dana* and *bheda*. Only when we were not amenable to any of these, they entered the war as the very last resort. They were doing their *kshatriya dharma*. Seeing *adharma*, one should not run away from it. One has to fight it, even sacrificing one's own life.” Thus Dhritarashtra first started blaming the Pandavas, then finally ended blaming himself. Again he spoke to Sanjaya: “I was perturbed by a premonition that all my sons will be killed. That has only been reinforced by your conveying the news of Bhishma's fall. You are making my mind, which already is burning, burn all the more. Tell me all that has taken place in the battle-field. On the side of my sons, there were eleven *akshauhinis* (divisions) while on the Pandavas' side there were only seven. How could Yudhishtira, with a

smaller army, get an upper hand and kill Bhishma? How did he array his army? Bhishma was an expert in arraying his army. How could Yudhishtira outwit Bhishma? Who were the people who fought there with courage, with cheerfulness and enthusiasm? Who were the ones who were trembling and cowardly? Who fought the best and who the worst?" When Sanjaya was about to answer, Dhritarashtra, stopping him, asked one more question which constitutes the first *sloka* in the Gita.

धर्मक्षेत्रे कुरुक्षेत्रे समवेता युयुत्सवः ।

मामकाः पाण्डवाश्चैव किमकुर्वत संजय ॥

Dharmakshetre kurukshetre samavetaa yuyutsavah,

Maamakaah paandavaaschaiva kimakurvata Sanjaya.

The usual interpretation of this verse is, that Dhritarashtra wants to know the way the battle is heading, but a more apt interpretation, under the circumstances, would seem to be that, Dhritarashtra, struck by Sanjaya's cool and serene attitude in bringing the news, suspects that some wonderful *dharma* must have been expounded in the battle-field. He introspects: "What was the *dharma* that made Bhishma so courageous, that made him sacrifice his life so cheerfully? Some *dharma*, which I do not know, must have been the forte of Bhishma. Similarly some *dharma* must have fortified the Pandavas, which made them ready to kill even Bhishma whom they revered so much, when they had to do it without option. The Pandavas could not have killed Bhishma without somebody convincing them that it was right for them to do so. Also Sanjaya is reporting the news without the least taint of agony. He behaves so serenely. What is

sustaining him? Why is he not sorry? If there is some such *dharma* which made him proof against the worst sorrows, I must know it, so that I may also be sustained by it at times of crises. There is a great *arti* (thirst) in me to find out that *dharma*." So he asks Sanjaya: "What was it that happened in the field? Tell me that."

Even such a mediocre man as Dhritarashtra realises that he is weak and bad and wants to know the higher *dharma* knowing which he can improve. Bad alone never exists in this world. It is always accompanied by good. However bad a man may be, there is always some good also in him. However good a man may be, there is always at least a trace of bad in him. But man can rise up to a higher plane where he transcends both good and bad. This he can do by realising his own absolute nature. Good and bad are on the relative plane, but man is infinitely higher. He is the Absolute, the Infinite Reality itself. Make your mind pure. There is something higher than all these worldly affairs we are entangled in. Our *Sanatana Dharma* is one which, when realised, can make us fear not even the atom bombs, were they to fall here. Our *dharma* is not a list of *do's* and *don'ts*. It is the science of our very being, our life. It is a process of developing and perfecting something wonderful available in our very constitution, and not yearning for some abode beyond the clouds, whether it be our going there or its coming down to us. Vedanta tells us the way to attain perfection through *Sanatana Dharma*. That state of perfection, that state of *Jivanmukti*, is one attaining which we are not disturbed, we are not perturbed, by anything happening to us. It is a state of *nitya*

tripti, perfect contentment. Attaining that, you will want nothing more from the world. Only when we are imperfect in ourselves we mistakenly think we can get the perfection we are lacking from the world outside; that is the folly. Perfection and contentment can only be had from *within*. Seek it; realise it; attain it!

Become good yourself and then try to improve the world. As your goodness increases, you will find the world also getting better and better. The world can never be fully perfect. It is changing, ephemeral. It cannot give permanent joy. Real, permanent joy is to be had from within us. Poverty, disease and death are the greatest miseries we can think of. Still we can face them without getting affected. We can rise above them only by realising our own Self, our true nature. Amidst chaos you must find cosmos. People are worried that the world is bad, but it is not so. What makes you all come here and listen? It is a thirst in you to evolve higher. Is it not a good sign? A hundred years ago, nay, even at the time the Gita was expounded, there was not so much of Vedantic thirst in men, as now. Even Arjuna knew only the *apara vidya* (secular knowledge) and not the *para vidya* (knowledge about the Self). So the world is getting better and better.

The object of Vedanta is to make man perfectly and permanently contented by realising his own true nature. It has nothing to offer to a perfectly contented man. I am sure that none in this assembly is perfectly happy. Otherwise you would not have been here. When following this *dharma* one becomes *nitya tripta*; there is no necessity for him to seek God. When one is perfectly contented, why should he go after God? I am not saying,

there is no God or that one should not seek him, but fulfilment in *ananda*, knowledge of the Absolute Existence is the same as the attainment of God. God is *Satchidananda*. He is not personal, he is purely impersonal. The *Sarvesvara* is Pure Existence, Pure Knowledge, Pure Bliss, all in one. When we take to Vedanta, we have got to leave aside the lesser conceptions of God, handed down to us by our parents and the society. From the personal God we have to raise our vision to the impersonal.

You are now in darkness and you have come here for some light. When there is darkness you cannot remove it by wrestling with it, by fighting with it. Bring in the light. The darkness automatically disappears. Similarly, we are wallowing in ignorance—the darkness of the mind and intellect. Will this ignorance go if you fight with it? No, ignorance can go only when you flood your mind and intellect with the light of knowledge. That knowledge, the supreme knowledge, is what we get from the Gita. Mere listening will not do. First hear it—*sravana*. Then think over it, turning it over and over in the mind—*manana*—cogitation. Once you are convinced, assimilate it and live your convictions and meditate—*nididhyasana*. These are the processes involved in realising your true Infinite Self. It shall be my endeavour not only to impart theoretical knowledge but instructions, too, on how to bring the theory into practice and how to meditate and realise

Arjuna was a courageous and chivalrous man. He was a great *bhakta* of Siva and other Gods. He did great *tapas* to get the *Pasupatastra*. He was unequalled in archery. Unexpectedly, a sorrow possessed him. He

found himself in a position where he had to fight and kill his very kith and kin and his *guru*. All his secular accomplishments could not give him strength in this crisis. He felt weak and confused. Then he asks Krishna.

कार्पण्यदोषोपहतस्वभावः पृच्छामि त्वां धर्मसम्मूढचेताः ।

यच्छ्रेयः स्यान्निश्चितं ब्रूहि तन्मे शिष्यस्तेऽहं शाधि मां त्वां प्रपन्नम् ॥

Kaarpanyadoshopahatasvabhaavah

prichchhaami tvaam dharmasammoodhachetaah;

Yachchhreyah syaannischitam broohi tanme

sishyasteham sadhi maam tvaam prapannam.

“O Krishna! Help me, I do not know what is beneficial to me. I am confused about my *dharma*. What is better—to win over the Kauravas or to let them win over us? Will their killing us be better or our killing them? If we were to kill our own people can we ever be happy?” (Arjuna’s chariot has been placed by Krishna just in front of Bhishma and Drona. So Arjuna’s chief concern is about them.) He says: “Those very people for whom I want to win this war are standing in the battle-field, ready to kill or be killed in the war. Bhishma is the one I revere and love above everyone and Drona is the one who taught me everything I know. They are worthy of worship by me. Instead of showering flowers, how am I to shower arrows on them? They are standing in the battle-field, ready to kill or be killed.

“My *viveka* (discriminative capacity) is covered by a taint of delusion and ignorance. I am unable to think for myself. I do not know what is the right thing for me to do. I surrender myself to you. What all I had

hitherto understood to be my *dharma*, has not been able to sustain me at this critical juncture. I am overpowered by sorrow. Do not think you can tempt me with an empire, for I do not want it. If I fight, there can only be two possibilities—winning, I will get the empire for my dear brothers, or dying, I will go to *swarga* and get Indra's position. To get either of these I will have to fight. But how am I to fight, when I am unable even to lift my bow? My skin is burning, my mouth is parched. I am a physical and mental wreck. So do not ask me to fight. Do not plead with me to stand up. I am unable to do so. But instead tell me that knowing which this sorrow, this weakness that has overpowered me, can be eradicated at once. Tell me of such a *dharma* alone. I do not want anything else."

Having uttered these words Arjuna kept silent. What is the use of all our accomplishments and worldly successes, if in moments of crisis we are not able to face them calmly and courageously? This was the plight of Arjuna which made him turn to Krishna for knowing that *dharma* which would sustain him in any crisis. In spite of all his accomplishments, Arjuna felt impotent at that critical time. Arjuna is called *gudakesa*, which means one who has controlled sleep. Not only that, he could control his hunger also. But no amount of physical strength and endurance or accomplishments could help him, for he was lacking in *jnana*. If this be the case with him, what about us? Are we also not faced with tragedies, disappointments, anxieties and afflictions? If we are not able to find a solution to all this in our religion, what is it worth? Does religion provide something for this? Yes, it does—through Vedanta.

What Arjuna is instinctively after is that *Sanatana Dharma*, having which he will be ever free from all weaknesses and sorrows, knowing which he will be able to face cheerfully any situation in life—poverty, disease, death and mental misery.

Is this not the innermost wish of each and every one? Does not everyone want unalloyed, permanent happiness? Is there a single individual who does not want happiness? There cannot be. That joy, that *ananda* alone is permanent, from which there never is a fall again into misery and sorrow, under any circumstance whatever. If there is anyone who does not want it, he is a fool. Those who think that anything short of it can give them abiding happiness—they are also fools. Their fate invariably would be coming to the earth and going away from it again and again, that is, repeated births and deaths, till they realise this Truth. Once the Truth is realised, that man is for ever free from all sorrows and miseries. He will bubble with joy. Do you not want that joy? Do you not want to float on the top of *ananda* for ever? Then hear these lectures, cogitate, meditate and realise.

Chapter 4

S A M A B H A V A — I

When Krishna heard Arjuna, he smiled before answering him. Krishna was feeling happy, because he realised that Arjuna was ripe for Vedanta. He seemed to feel: “O Arjuna! You were thinking all these days that you were a great *bhakta* (devotee). But you were mistaken.” The highest type of *bhakta* never prays for any material benefit. His prayer always is: “O God! I have surrendered myself completely to you, taken refuge in you alone. But I am not able to remove all the disturbances of my mind. Give me a solution to end all my mental agitations. Tell me, how I am to cross this *samsara sagara* (ocean of worldly life) and become one with you.” God is pleased only when He is asked the way by which the *bhakta* can go beyond *sukha* and *dukkha* and realise Him. Now, at long last, Arjuna’s question had come as a result of ascending to true *bhakti*. With true *bhakti*, how easy it is to cross the *samsara sagara*!

Krishna says slowly:

अशोच्यान् अन्वशोचस्त्वं प्रज्ञावादांश्च भाषसे ।

गतासूनगतासूंश्च नानुशोचन्ति पण्डिताः ॥

*Asochyaan anvasochastvam prajnaavaadaamscha bhaashase,
Gataasoon agataasoomscha naanusochanti panditaah.*

“O Arjuna, it is a curious and a wonderful thing that you are talking the words of a wise man, but simultaneously acting quite to the contrary. You are regretting for those about whom you should not have any regret. Wise men do not regret about people who are dead and people who are yet to die.” Here Krishna mentions only two types of people. Those who are dead and those who are not yet dead. According to him, the living ones are only constantly preparing to die. About birth we cannot be certain. But anything that is born must die. Now he says: “Pandits do not regret.” We see so many pandits very well versed in Sanskrit, who have the whole of the *Brahmasutras* and *Bhashyas* at the tip of their tongues, who have thoroughly mastered the Ramayana, Mahabharata and the rest, yet do we find them refusing to regret when their kith and kin die? No, because these are not pandits in the real sense. *Panda* means ‘knowledge pertaining to the soul’ and so *pandit* means the man who has knowledge of the soul and not of mere scriptures.

Krishna continues:

न त्वेवाहं जातु नासं न त्वं नेमे जनाधिपाः ।

न चैव न भविष्यामः सर्वे वयमतः परम् ॥

*Na tvevaaham jaatu naasam na tvam neme janaadhipaah,
Na chaiva na bhavishyaamah sarve vayamatah param.*

“There was never a time when I was not existing. This particular body was born only a few years ago, but I have been existing always. And never was there a time when you were not existing. And there was never a time when all these kings, assembled here, were not existing.”

As Krishna says this, Arjuna remembers something pertaining to the Vedanta he had learnt in his childhood. Many people chant *gayatri* everyday, but not many of them know that it means, "That Infinite Reality, that wonderful splendour, that which illumines the three states of consciousness, that which never dies and which has never come into existence—in that great entity, *Brahman*, I take refuge." So, Arjuna too had learnt Vedanta but had never tried to go into it, understand it and assimilate it. Krishna's assurance that everyone assembled in that field had always been existing, kindles his interest and he wants to know more. But a doubt arises in his mind.

"Krishna's statement, as to how everyone existed always, may be right. But my worry is not about the past. May be, there never was a time when any of us did not exist, but in this war I may kill many people including Bhishma and Drona and thus they will cease to exist. So my concern is about the future, when there can be and will be cessation of our existence," Arjuna thought.

Sensing this doubt, Krishna adds: "Moreover, there will never be a time when I, you or any of these kings will cease to exist. We have all been living since eternity and will continue to live for ever. We have been, we are and we will be eternal. Know it."

Arjuna's doubt has still not been fully cleared. He feels: "Krishna is now talking about the Soul that I have sometimes heard of. Granting that the Soul is immortal, what about the body? If Bhishma is killed I will feel sorry for the death of his body. I do not want to kill or cut his body."

देहिनोऽस्मिन् यथा देहे कौमारं यौवनं जरा ।

तथा देहान्तरप्राप्तिः धीरस्तत्र न मुह्यति ॥

*Dehinosmin yathaa dehe kaumaaram yauvanam jaraa,
Tathaa dehaantarapraaptih dheerastatra na muhyati.*

Dehi is that indwelling entity which has this body. When I say, my watch, the watch is objective to me, separate from me. Similarly in saying, my body, my mind, the body and mind are things other than the true entity 'I', the Soul.

This *deha* (body) of the Soul undergoes many changes *kaumaram, yauvanam, jara* (childhood, youth and old age). We are born. The body grows from the infant state to the state of boyhood, then to that of youth, thence to middle age and then to old age. If we observe these things carefully, we see that in each case the preceeding state dies and the succeeding state is born. Thus in each change, there is death involved. Only, we do not recognise it. If you should regret death, that is, fall of the body, you should also regret the other deaths, the bodily changes. Growth means decay and death of the previous state. If it were not so, after being born, the child must remain static and stagnant, ever in childhood. Thus, if all the infants stop growing and remain infants, what will the state of the world be? Death is as much a change and a necessity as any other change of the body. It is indispensable. If a child is not growing properly, we are worried. Yet even a child's growing is death in the real sense. As the former changes are inevitable, death, the ultimate change, is also inevitable. Life means change, dynamism. It just cannot be static. So Krishna

says: "You are grieving because your vision is restricted. My vision is not restricted. My vision goes beyond, it penetrates the apparent and sees the soul as the real entity. In the soul there is no change. If you want changelessness in the ever changing body, that cannot be. Be a *dhira* (man of courage). Do not kill others wantonly, or when it is not your duty. But if it is your duty and through you death occurs, compose yourself. Have the capacity to sustain." Arjuna understood this much, but had a further doubt. "It is right that I should not regret death, as the true indwelling personality does not die. But what about the pain while living? If I cut off the limbs of Bhishma or Drona, they will suffer pain before me or if my limbs are cut, I will suffer pain. Will I not be sorry then? What about the ordinary sorrow, pain and regrets that are ever afflicting us in our everyday life?"

Krishna replies:

मात्रास्पर्शस्तु कौन्तेय शीतोष्णसुखदुःखदाः ।

आगमापायिनोऽनित्याः तांस्तितिक्षस्व भारत ॥

*Maatraasparsaostu kaunteya seetoshnasukhadukkhadaah,
Aagamaapaayinonityaah taan titikshasva Bhaarata.*

Matra is a word derived from *mee*, to measure, to know, to understand. So *matras* are the *indriyas* (organs of sensation) by which we know the external world. The equipments for it are the eye, the ear, the nose, the tongue and the skin. Shut your eyes, plug your ears and nose, bind the mouth and the whole body, and anybody bound that way will be no better than a fallen piece of log. As far as the external world is concerned, it is dead to you. As soon as these are opened, one by one, you understand the world.

By the five senses we understand the world through the processes of *sabda* (sound), *sparsa* (touch), *roopa* (form), *rasa* (taste) and *gandha* (smell). These are the five *vishayas*, categories of sensation. Life means, man in the waking state, living in the world, keeping these *indriyas* open; that is all. From the awareness of the world, we have certain knowledge and understanding. What is the result of this understanding? In the ultimate analysis, it is *sita* (cold), *ushna* (heat), *sukha* and *dukkha* (happiness and sorrow). The mother is happy to see her son well fed and unhappy to see him famished. That is, she is happy and unhappy through the same eyes. When you get up and see auspicious things, you are happy. If you happen to see inauspicious things, you are unhappy. Why? The senses go out and gather the *vishayas*; sometimes they give good reports, which give us *sukha* and sometimes bad reports, which give us *dukkha*. What is the nature of *sukha* and *dukkha*? They come and go—*agamapayinah*. They have no permanent value. That something will give us always *sukha* or always *dukkha* is a wrong notion. The same perception can give us *sukha* now and *dukkha* at other times, and the same perception can give *sukha* to one and *dukkha* to another at the same time. Drink a cup of coffee, first thing in the morning. It is very nice, invigorating. If you have a second cup, the joy is there, but it is inferior to that of the first cup. From the third, it is much less and the fourth and fifth cups, if you drink somehow, cease to give you joy. You get only nausea. The coffee was the same throughout. The first cup gave you *sukha* and the last cup *dukkha*. So *sukha* and *dukkha* do not reside in the objects of the world.

A man wants a son. The son is born. He is educated and when about to be married, he disobeys and quarrels with his father. The father also gets angry and disowns him. So, that son who was giving him happiness all these twentyfive years, gives him only unhappiness now. Under the same set of circumstances, people act differently and the same person reacts to the same set of circumstances differently at different times. So joy and misery do not depend on the objects of the external world. They reside in ourselves. In our dealing with worldly objects—let it be anything: a job, wife, or children—when we get joy or misery we think we get it from these. The wrong understanding that *sukha* and *dukkha* reside in them is *avidya* or *mayabodha* (ignorance). The seat of happiness is within ourselves. This is the first understanding we should have. Happiness and unhappiness come and go. They are impermanent, *anitya*. They are projected momentarily on the mind. Are they real, valid, genuine and true? Have they any abiding value? They are just momentary features of the mind, called *sukha* and *dukkha*, whose seat is within ourselves. That we are happy or unhappy because of the world outside, is the primary wrong notion that we are hugging on to. “My wife is troubling me; my boss is annoying me” and such things are also meaningless complaints. Do not blame the world. No amount of material prosperity or success in worldly dealings can give you real joy. A man earning Rs. 100/- thinks he will be perfectly happy if he gets Rs. 500/-. A man earning Rs. 500/- wants to get Rs. 2000/-. A man earning Rs. 2000/- wants to contest the election. If he wins, he wants a deputy prime ministership, then prime ministership and presidentship.

Reaching that height also, is he happy? No. All that our late president Dr. Rajendra Prasad wanted, was to lead a modest and peaceful life, in an *asram* (hermitage). If you are looking for happiness from the external world, it will be just a wild goose chase. This *avidya* or *mayabodha* must be removed first. Do not blame the world: let anything happen. Find the fault in yourself, in your own mind. This knowledge is what is given by all our *sastras*.

मन एव मनुष्याणां कारणं बन्धमोक्षयोः

बन्धाय विषयासक्तं मुक्तं निर्विषयं स्मृतम् ॥

*Mana eva manushyaanaam kaaranam bandhamokshayoh,
Bandhaaya vishayaasaktam muktam nirvishayam smritam.*

Mind alone is the cause of bondage as well as the release of man. If you are attached to the objects of the outside world, you are bound. Recurring birth and death will be your fate. Disassociate your mind from worldly objects, even though remaining in their midst, like a lotus leaf in water (*padmapatramivaambhasa*). It is submerged in water, yet water does not stick to it. Similarly, though physically associating with the world, mentally detach yourself. How? It is no use saying "O God, give me *jnana*, give me *jnana* (knowledge)." Nothing can be had without self-effort. There is a story to illustrate this.

Some sages were performing a *yajna*. A Brahmin went there. They asked him to recite the Vedas. When he expressed his inability to do so, he was ridiculed and denied entry into their midst. Ashamed and hurt, the Brahmin went to the forests and started doing severe *tapas* (penance)

to get a vision of Brahma. After a few months Brahma appeared before him and asked him what he wanted. The Brahmin replied: "Grant that I may know the Vedas completely by heart right now." Brahma replied: "It is not possible. Study the Vedas at least for two months, then you will know." The Brahmin was not prepared to learn them. So he again started his *tapas* determined that he would accomplish his purpose or die. Brahma, struck by his sincerity, thought of a way to bring the Brahmin to see reason. Next day, when the Brahmin went to the river for his bath, he found an old man (who was Brahma in disguise) throwing grains of sand, one by one, in the river. When asked what he was doing, the old man replied that he was constructing a bund across the river. The Brahmin laughed at the idiocy of the old man and said that it was an impossible feat. Even cartloads of sand would not be enough to construct a bund. Then the old man said: "I can construct a bund throwing grains of sand much easier than your learning the Vedas without studying them." Saying this he disappeared. The Brahmin realised his mistake. He went back and started studying the Vedas. Because of the concentration of mind he had acquired during the *ghora tapas* (intense penance) he could master the Vedas very quickly. He went to the *yajna sala* again and recited the Vedas before the assembly of sages and won their acclaim.

If you want anything, do not think God is going to drop a packet for you from above. If you want *jnana*, hear, understand, think, cogitate and assimilate Vedanta. Try to act upon it and meditate over it. The process of knowing is a conscious process within. Be aware of your own mind and improve it, if you want to outlive *sukha* and

dukkha. It is an internal process. Know it; understand it. *Sukha* and *dukkha* come from within. So, manipulate within. Train the mind. Know your mind. Know that joy and pain are momentary, ephemeral and transient. Determine: "I must not care for anything unreal." When joy or sorrow comes, ignore it and sustain it.

When your son is sick, it is no use saying: "What am I to do? Oh! my son is sick." Do you think your worrying will cure your son? Bring in a doctor. Treat the son properly. Do your part properly and do not brood. Your negative thought-force makes your mind weak and it weakens the boy also. Thought-force has that effect.

Not knowing that *sukha* and *dukkha* are two movements within ourselves, we regret over *dukkha*. We want to change the outside world. *Sukha* and *dukkha* are two feelings within—one pleasant and the other unpleasant. They are two processes in awareness. While sleeping deeply a person is unaware of *sukha* and *dukkha*. As soon as one wakes up, movements are created in the mind, just like waves. The mind awake, receives two kinds of impact. One is *sukha*, the other is *dukkha*. How to overcome them? This is the secret of practical Vedanta.

यं हि न व्यथयन्त्येते पुरुषं पुरुषर्षभ ।

समदुःखसुखं धीरं सोऽमृतत्वाय कल्पते ॥

Yam hi na vyathayantye te purusham purusharshabha,
Samadukhasukham dheeram somritatvaaya kalpate.

"He alone is competent for *Moksha* who, knowing *sukha* and *dukkha* to be transient, impermanent, is not shaken or assaulted or made to waver by them; in whom no plnch is caused by them."

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How is it possible to remain stoically calm when *sukha* and *dukkha* assault us? That can be done only by cultivating *samabhava*, equanimity towards them. If you are able to cultivate *samabhava* in the face of *sukha* and *dukkha*, then alone are you fit for *Moksha*; not otherwise. This is a categorical statement.

But what do we do? Because of our misunderstanding, we are swayed hither and thither by *sukha* and *dukkha*. Arjuna too had learnt the *sastras*. He had performed *yajnas* and *yagas* and observed religious austerities. But he had not learnt true Vedanta. He was not fit for *Moksha*. Similarly, we are also not fit for *Moksha*.

Whatever worldly attainments we might have, if we have not cultivated *samabhava*, we have attained nothing. In sleep, we are not conscious of anything. The mind is at rest. As soon as we wake up, different impressions and thoughts flow through the mind—the thought-flow being intermittent, constant and consecutive. Just as waves rise and subside on the surface of the ocean, so also thoughts rise and ebb, and this flow of thoughts is what is called mind. These thoughts ordinarily subside only during absolute unconsciousness or sleep. In sleep we are not aware of the external world or ourselves. Anything may occur around us. It means nothing to us because we are not aware. The moment one wakes up, the *indriyas* start functioning and the flow of thought starts. Whatever be the thoughts that flow, the ultimate result is *sukha* and *dukkha*. Different thoughts come and go. One thought gives the sensation of *sukha* and another *dukkha*. What is the nature of this flow? Though it appears as a continuous stream, it is not so. One thought rises, then subsides; then another thought rises, it subsides and an-

other rises—one thought following another. Never do two thoughts overlap. They are unconnected but follow one another very closely. Necessarily, since they are unconnected, however close one thought may be to another, there is an infinitesimal interval between two thoughts when the mind is actually thoughtless. In between two thoughts there must be an intermediate state of neither *sukha* nor *dukkha*. This interval is very important and significant as we shall see later. Know the process of these thoughts in order to cultivate *samabhava*.

Now for any flow to take place, there must be a substratum which is motionless and unchanging. For a river (that is water) to flow there must be at the bottom a river-bed that remains unchanging, motionless. So also, for the flow of thoughts, called the mind, there must be an unchanging substratum which is pure consciousness. Vedantic truths cannot be fully explained by similies. Only certain aspects can be explained by similies. Our mind can be compared to an ocean. Just as waves, foam, bubbles and breakers are part and parcel of the ocean, though they appear to be different, so also we name certain thoughts as *sukha* and some as *dukkha*. But the content of each thought is the same, whether they be *sukha*, *dukkha* or otherwise, just as the content of all the waves and breakers is the same sea-water.

The content of each thought is awareness, pure understanding, pure consciousness or *bodha*.

When a torch is focussed on a pole, we see the pole, when it is focussed on the microphone, we see the microphone, yet the process of illumination is the same. The same water, when poured in different coloured bottles,

seems to be differently coloured, but it is the same colourless water. So we may have different thoughts and different inferences, but the essence of (the unit contained in) each thought is the same pure awareness, pure consciousness, *bodha* or pure understanding.

When you are in a state of deep meditation, all thoughts cease. There is just pure consciousness within you and you are conscious only of the Self; you are consciousness alone. The moment your mind expresses itself there occurs a movement on the consciousness and the thought-flow starts.

In the wavy motion of thoughts, one motion gives a pleasing feeling, *sukha* and another gives a displeasing feeling, *dukkha*. In abstract thinking our senses do not operate. It is pure imagination. Then, even though the external world is not affecting you, you are often conscious of *sukha* and *dukkha*. We simply misunderstand that *sukha* and *dukkha* come from outside. External objects cannot give us joy and pain. Be definite about it.

Krishna says:

ईश्वरः सर्वभूतानां हृद्देशेऽर्जुन तिष्ठति ।

भ्रामयन्सर्वभूतानि यन्त्रारूढानि मायया ॥

तमेव शरणं गच्छ सर्वभावेन भारत ।

तत्प्रसादात्परां शान्तिं स्थानं प्राप्स्यसि शाश्वतम् ॥

Iswarah sarvabhootaanaam hriddeserjuna tishthati

Bhraamayana sarvabhootaani yantraaroodhaani maayayaa.

Tameva saranam gachchha sarvabhaavena Bhaarata,

Tatprasaadaatparaam saantim sthaanam praapsyasi saasvatam.

“God is seated in the heart of each and everyone. At the seat of consciousness—in, above, underneath and through every thought—He is seated.” Do not think a blue coloured Krishna is physically sitting there. No, it is our own Pure Consciousness that is Krishna. Blue colour is the colour of the Infinite. Pure Consciousness is the infinite God pervading everywhere like the blue sky.

“By each and every method, by each and every thought, try to go closer to Him. Then only, by the grace of the God within you, can you have permanent happiness, pure *ananda*, from which you can have no fall.”

Thus two things are required if you are to have permanent *ananda*:

(i) your consciously getting closer and closer to him (your own Real Self); and

(ii) His grace (which will naturally be yours when you consciously try to approach Him with all sincerity).

This consciously getting closer to Him is nothing but the process of *jnana*. Only if you understand it, you can assimilate it, since it is a conscious and not a blind process. It is the most direct process of realisation. By my repeated stress on *jnana*, do not get the impression that I am decrying *bhakti*. Real *bhakti* and *jnana* are not different; they are one and the same. But the process of *bhakti* is not direct, as Krishna himself points out in a *sloka* in the Gita.

तेषां सततयुक्तानां भजतां प्रीतिपूर्वकम् ।

ददामि बुद्धियोगं तं येन मामुपयान्ति ते ॥

*Teshaam satatayuktaanaam bhajataam preetipoorvakam,
Dadaami buddhiyogam tam yena maamupayaanti te.*

Krishna says: "Real *bhakti* is indeed wonderful. But do not stop there, for it is not the direct process to *Mukti*. True, the very process of real *bhakti* gives strength, satisfaction and joy to sincere *bhaktas*. In the case of such *bhaktas*, I give them *buddhiyoga*, the intellectual understanding, the knowledge of myself in my real aspect, real nature, by which they attain me." So even sincere *bhakti* is not a direct process. To a true *bhakta*, somehow or other, sooner or later, an occasion arises when he reads books on Vedanta or hears Vedantic discourses and his mind is turned towards *jnana*. He grasps intellectually: "God is within me. I must approach Him direct."

Invariably such a turn of mind occurs. This *jnana* process, that is attaining God by transcending *sukha* and *dukkha* and consciously striving to merge in the knowledge of the Self, is the supreme goal. The *buddhi* process is the only direct process of attaining Him. This is a categorical statement in the Gita. For realising God, we must know the true nature of God. When we analyse the true nature of God, we come to the conclusion that God cannot be personal but is impersonal. He is as much within us as outside. The moment you realise that God is within you, there is no more *sukha* and *dukkha*. Can there be *sukha* and *dukkha* when God is there? This outliving process is called *jnana* process. Through this process alone we can have *Mukti* or *Moksha*. In the Gita, Krishna gives certain signs and symptoms of a real *bhakta*:

अद्वेष्टा सर्वभूतानां मैत्रः करुण एव च ।

निर्ममो निरहंकारः समदुःखसुखः क्षमी ॥

*Adveshtaa sarvabhootaanaam maitrah karuna eva cha,
Nirmamo nirahamkaarah samadukkhasukhah kshamee.*

Note the words *sama*, *dukkha*, *sukha* and *kshamee*. A true *bhakta* has the sustaining capacity, *kshama*, whatever difficulties and disappointments there may be for him. Knowing that these are unreal, impermanent and transient, the *bhakta* refuses to be cowed down by them. He for ever fixes his vision on the real, permanent *Isvara*. So automatically he cultivates *samabhava* in *sukha* and *dukkha*. So the main inner symptom of a true *bhakta* and a true *jnani* is the same, EQUANIMITY. There is no difference between *jnana yoga*, *bhakti yoga*, Etc. They are only different names for that one *yoga*, which is the process of establishing our identity with God. To a man of realisation, there are no two *yogas*. The difference is only apparent. Whatever the external manifestations of these different *yogas* may be, the one internal manifestation is the outliving of *sukha* and *dukkha* and dwelling in *samabhava*, EQUANIMITY.

Pure Vedanta takes people from bondage to freedom directly. There are no intermediary steps in it. You are having *sukha* and *dukkha* now; so you must be able to acquire peace of mind now. It is no use saying: "After such and such a time I shall have peace." Get it now. You can leap from *sukha* and *dukkha* to *ananda*, from *maya* (delusion) to *jnana*; it is just one jump. If there is an ant on top of a tree and it wants to climb to another tree, it comes all the way down from the first tree before

ascending the second, whereas the *hamsa*, swan, flies direct from the first tree to the second. Vedantins similarly take a direct leap from bondage to freedom. It is within your capacity. If your son is dead, ordinarily, you will grieve at least for a few days. But a Vedantin will not. That does not mean he is heartless, but he uses his *viveka*. After all, what is the endeavour of every bereaved father? It is to outlive the *dukkha*, to get over it. Only he takes his own time for it. But a Vedantin tells himself: "In spite of regrets my son will not come back. And in the real sense he is not dead at all. So why should I grieve?" Even if at first there is a pinch of grief, he consciously gets over it.

Thus whatever be the circumstances, he will be floating on top of *sukha* and *dukkha*, and not be drowned by them. He will not be conditioned, affected or touched by any of the worldly circumstances. It is a very wonderful state. Such a person alone can have *Moksha*. Anybody can have it. If we do not we alone are to be blamed. If like the owl we keep our eyes shut to the sunlight of this *jnana*, who is to be blamed? Start practising it right now. Go back to your homes and from now on, whatever difficulties assault you, start practising *samabhava*, and whatever happens, do not be upset or affected, for you are verily the Infinite Soul, Pure Consciousness, nothing less.

Chapter 5

S A M A B H A V A — II

Man's life on earth is a succession of periods or moments of happiness and unhappiness—*sukha* and *dukkha*. There may be a beggar, a king, a leper and a healthy man. Their experiences may be different, but all those experiences can be had by them only through the sense organs, as perceptions. When these perceptions come and touch the mind they give *sukha* and *dukkha*. Life means *sukha* and *dukkha*. Man thinks he can avoid *dukkha* and have *sukha* alone. He leads an extrovert life, trying to amass wealth, thinking that material prosperity will give him *sukha*. He thinks he can have *sukha* by indulging in sense pleasures, little knowing that any pleasure is wearing a cap of sorrow. *Sukha* itself is a progenitor of *dukkha*, for, when it leaves, it creates *dukkha*. Any *sukha*, even if extended for a long time, ceases to give us happiness and turns into weary *dukkha*. Thus having *sukha* alone is impossible. *Dukkha* cannot be avoided. Neither *sukha* nor *dukkha* is a permanent feature. *Sukha* and *dukkha* are in essence the same. Knowing this, a man, who wants peace of mind, must learn to outlive or transcend both *sukha* and *dukkha*. This transcending of *sukha* and *dukkha* is called *samabhava* or equanimity.

True religion means cultivation of *samabhava*. People misunderstand this term. They interpret it as: whatever

there is in front of you—milk, *laddoo* and other sweet-meats or some dirty matter—treat them in the same way. Whoever is in front of you, a man, a woman, a king, a beggar or a leper—treat them in the same manner. This is external, artificial *samabhava* and it is meaningless to develop such a kind of equanimity. Even a *jnani* (a realised sage), when he is given some *laddoos* and some dirty matter, will choose the former and reject the latter. Real *samabhava* means internal *samabhava*. Whatever our experiences are, in whatever way the world affects us, it can give us only *sukha* and *dukkha*. Be equanimous towards *sukha* and *dukkha*, when it strikes your heart, the inner centre. That is real *samabhava*. It is internal and not external. Each and every one of you is capable of developing it. It is a state where you will not be touched, shaken or affected when hit by *sukha* and *dukkha*.

A man, affected by sorrow, usually says: “It is my *prarabdha* (fate) which is giving me all this misery. I am just not born lucky.” Once he cultivates *samabhava*, *prarabdha*, the planets or the *sirorekha* (destiny) can do nothing to him. They can only, perhaps, affect his physical circumstances, but, inside, he will be calm, serene, peaceful and cheerful.

In so far as *sukha* and *dukkha* are created by outside objects like wife, children, your officer and so on, cultivate *samabhava* first. Somebody scolds you. Until yesterday you were affected and hurt. But not now. Do not be affected. This is the first step. Reason thus: “That Infinite Principle is as much in them as elsewhere. If I start regulating the whole world, and wait for the world to become perfect, before starting to make myself perfect, it would be just a wild dream. It can never be. In this

imperfect state of affairs, let me become perfect.” A man entering water must know how to swim. Otherwise he will get himself drowned, whereas, if he knows swimming, he will come out refreshed, having had a clean bath. So also we must know how to swim in the *samsara sagara* (ocean of worldly life). Then we can come out with a refreshed mind and refined awareness. Change your attitude right now. Start cultivating *samabhava*.

A man may have a sick or mad wife. He prays to God: “O God! give me a healthy wife in my next birth at least.” In his next life he gets a healthy wife, but she henpecks him day and night. So he prays: “O God! Give me a good wife.” The next life finds him having a very good wife, but alas, she dies very young. And he prays again for a long-living wife with virtues and attainments. So, do not go on lengthening the chain of your births by unending desires. However perfect the external circumstances may be, you cannot get abiding joy from them. Use the present set of circumstances as a stepping stone to evolve higher. A *viveki* (man of discrimination), when he has a permanently sick, mad or quarrelsome wife, says to himself: “I thought she will be giving me happiness, but she is not doing that. Let me take it that God has given me a JADABHARATA to take care of. I will do my best for her. That is my *dharma*. Let me do this *dharma* without any expectation. Let it teach me that the world as such cannot give me an iota of joy.” This is the way to reason and analyse our life. This ought to be the attitude of a man going towards perfection.

You go to the market. During the bargain, the vendor abuses you. You feel hurt. But do not feel upset. Be a true Vedantin. Knowing that the Infinite Princi-

ple is expressing itself through him also, just as it does through you, transcend and outlive your wounded vanity. Take it that he is a *guru* (teacher) teaching you *samabhava*. Unknowingly he is helping you in your spiritual development. If you can remain unaffected, know that you are progressing.

You and your wife start for a picture. Just then a friend drops in. He has interrupted your plan; your unavoidable duty is to offer him hospitality. If you are able to do that without a pang of regret, without painful thoughts of what you have had to forego on account of him, without cursing him inwardly, then know that you are progressing. Thus take every *sukha* and *dukkha* in the attitude that they are helping you more and more towards *samabhava*.

Thus each and every onslaught in life should make you judge yourself: "Am I able to keep my *samabhava*?" Instead of being a petty human being getting pained at every hit you receive from life, you must decide: "I am not going to let these things affect my mind." Whether you are in the market place, in a crowded bus, in the office or anywhere else, whatever be your experiences, whatever dealings the others mete out to you—each experience you must use for transcending *sukha* and *dukkha*. Consider that each and every incident is a lesson in Vedanta; each person you come across, a veritable God. Your friend may criticise you. Ordinarily you would have been upset and hurt. But now, you will consider him a *guru*, because he is giving you an occasion to outlive the pain of criticism and increase your *samabhava*. Your child may fail in his examinations. Formerly, you would have been upset. But now you will admonish him

for his failure, for it is your duty to discipline the child. You will not shout in anger, or let the incident touch your mind. One word of caution! *Samabhava does not mean passivity or callousness.* If your child requires an occasional beating, you must administer that, but without anger. Punish the child with a calm mind. The child needs the punishment and so you administer that, but let it not affect you. So also, in your worldly dealings, you may have to put on a mask of anger, but have equanimity within.

So far, we have dealt with transcending *sukha* and *dukkha*, as far as they are caused by the external world. Here, this outside world gives you an impression which you receive through your senses and it creates a reaction in you of either *sukha* or *dukkha*. This kind of *sukha* and *dukkha* can be easily transcended with practice. There is a subtler type of *sukha* and *dukkha*, which is more difficult to outlive. For example, a wife starts imagining all sorts of accidents which her husband might be involved in, when he does not return at the usual time from the office. She is agitated and depressed. Here, no sense organs are operating. No external objects are troubling her. It is pure mentation, imagination running riot. These imaginary *dukkhas* give much more pain than physical *dukkhas*. *Viveka*, in other words, right thinking, coupled with *samabhava* will eradicate this second type, for this *dukkha* is hypothetical, imaginary and not real.

While we are deep asleep, there are no thoughts. As soon as we are awake, the flow of thought starts. Different thoughts bring *sukha* and *dukkha* in varying degrees. Small bits of thoughts often do not give us any particular *sukha* or *dukkha*, stress or tension. It is only applied

thoughts—thoughts in which we give mental expression to our worldly attachments and thoughts pertaining to things from which we try to get joy and happiness—that create stress and tension in us.

A mother has sent her son to America. She worries about him night and day. Why? Because of attachment. Her mind goes out, reaches out, issues forth to an object which is beyond the comprehension of her senses at the moment. Her worries are purely imaginary. She expects her son will give her happiness if he is with her and when he is not, she is troubled. In this kind of *sukha* or *dukkha*, *the mind projects, goes out, to something away from us*. As long as the son is in America this stress is there—almost constantly—sometimes it may be less, sometimes more, depending on how many other thoughts she is entertaining. When the son writes that he will return soon, she is comparatively happy—*the projection of her mind is reduced a little and her stress is reduced*. When her son returns, *the projection is completely withdrawn*. She is temporarily happy, contented. But how long does this last? The very next day she is unhappy on another score—may be her son did not like the food she had prepared and did not eat well. The mind is projected out again. The mother was thinking all along: ‘I am unhappy because my son is away’. If her contention had been true, she should have been perfectly happy once her son had returned. Why is she unhappy now? It is a constant, recurring misunderstanding in us, that we are happy or unhappy because of the external world and circumstances and the things outside. But the truth is that as long as our mind is projecting outside, issuing forth, away from ourselves, towards the objects of the world, we are subject to worries and anxieties.

The moment the mind is withdrawn back to ourselves, from its projections, we are contented and happy. Mind without projection is having *samabhava*, equanimity. The secret of true happiness is a non-issuing forth, non-projecting mind. This projection is caused by *raga*, *dwesha* and *bhaya* (fear).

What are *raga* and *dwesha*?

Raga is the tendency in man to go out for external objects to get satisfaction and *dwesha* is the tendency to avoid things which give him displeasure.

Raga is what makes us say or feel: "I want this. Give me more." "I want *sukha*" is also *raga*. *Dwesha* makes us say: "I do not want this. Take it away from me." "I do not want *dukkha*" is also a feeling of *dwesha*. Give an infant some sugar. It will put its tongue out and try to get more and more, thus expressing *raga*. Give it something bitter. It will spit it out. This is *dwesha*.

These two features are congenital, they are with us right from our birth. *Raga* and *dwesha* exist not only in man but also in all beings. It is a tendency common to all living beings of the world. Krishna says in the Bhagavad Gita:

इच्छाद्वेषसमुत्थेन द्वन्द्वमोहेन भारत ।

सर्वभूतानि संमोहं सर्गे यान्ति परंतप ॥

*Ichchhaadweshasamutthena dvandvamohena Bhaarata,
Sarvabhootaani sammoham sarge yaanti Parantapa.*

"Right from birth, all living beings are deluded by two forces—*raga* and *dwesha*—wanting more and more of the things that give pleasure and avoiding things that give

displeasure." Animals cannot outlive these forces, but man can and must.

How do the forces of *raga* and *dwesha* affect man? They make him selfish. Propelled by *raga*, he wants to grab things from others and amass more and more wealth. *Dwesha* makes him dislike and hate some things and persons. *Raga* and *dwesha* are at the root of all sins, for we commit sins only out of selfishness. Brothers fight, father and son fight, neighbours fight; the cause is always selfishness which arises out of *raga* and *dwesha*. Thus, if a man is to become good, he must free himself from the clutches of *raga* and *dwesha*.

Religious discipline is that by which this *raga* and *dwesha* are absolutely removed from us. If we are not able to remove these forces from ourselves, understand that we are not at all religious, in spite of our pretensions. The more of *raga* and *dwesha* we throw away, the more do we become virtuous, religious and spiritual. The more of *raga* and *dwesha* we harbour within ourselves, the worse we become and degenerate into veritable demons. If we, with our intellect, wisdom and discriminating capacity, are not able to get rid of these animal forces, are we better than animals? The aim of any discipline in any true religion is to purge oneself of *raga* and *dwesha*. So rid yourself of *raga* and *dwesha*, if you want to become better than animals, nay, if you want to become better than human beings and be Gods walking on the surface of the earth. *Raga* and *dwesha* are settled like dirt in our hearts. To progress spiritually, this dirt must be removed completely. This is the primary requisite in one's religion. When a strong *raga* or *dwesha* takes hold of you, you cannot remove it immediately. If you are over-

powered by passion or anger, it will not be possible for you to arrest it suddenly. When you are thus overpowered, you mistakenly take it to be the real state. The power of discrimination temporarily leaves you. But despite this, you are not doomed. After the passion has subsided and the mind is comparatively calm, there comes a reaction, a remorse, that you had slipped from the ideal. You go on brooding over how you had given way to your passions. Outlive even this *dukkha*, this remorse.

Getting rid of *raga* and *dvesha* helps immensely in cultivating *samabhava*. As long as *raga* and *dvesha* rule over us, our minds issue forth, project out seeking fulfilment of our likes and dislikes. When *raga* and *dvesha* reduce, the mind is withdrawn back to ourselves. Mind, without projection, enjoys equanimity and contentment. We mistakenly think that objects of the outside world can give us *sukha* or *dukkha*. But the truth is that *sukha* and *dukkha* reside in our own minds. For example, a friend may call you a madman and because you like him, you tolerate it. It does not prick you. When another person, whom you do not like, refers to you as a madman, you are hurt. A drunkard passing by calls you a madman and you ignore it, because you know he is not in his senses. You heard the same word 'madman' through the same ears but from different sources. It reached your consciousness and was received as an idea or thought, but the reaction produced was different in each case. So a thing, as such, does not create pleasure or pain. Pleasure and pain depend on our mental attitude. Their seats are in ourselves. Impress and engrave this fact in your minds.

Sankara says in Bhaja Govindam:

गतवति वायौ देहापाये
भार्या बिभ्यति तस्मिन् काये ॥

Gatavati vaayau dehaapaaye,
Bhaaryaa bibhyati tasmin kaaye.

Until death, a wife respects her husband and takes him for a veritable God. That body had given so much pleasure to her till then, but after death she is afraid of it. It gives her displeasure. She wants to dispose off the body as early as possible. So pleasure and pain reside in her mind and not in the body of her husband.

Thus, knowing that the seat of *sukha* and *dukkha* is within ourselves, we must consciously strive to transcend them and cultivate equanimity. It is, as I said, easier to cultivate *samabhava* when objects of the external world affect us. But it is rather difficult in the case of *sukha* and *dukkha*, arising out of pure imagination. Strive for it and you will succeed. Vasishtha says in the Yogavasishtha:

संकल्पजालकलनैव जगत् समग्रम्
संकल्पजालकलनात्तु मनोविलासाः
संकल्पजालं अलं उत्सृज निर्विकल्पम्
आश्रित्य निश्चयमवाप्नुहि राम शान्तिम् ॥

Sankalpajaalakalanaiva jagat samagram,
Sankalpajaalakalanaattu manovilaasaah,
Sankalpajaalam alam utsrija nirvikalpam,
Aasritya nischayamavaapnuhi Raama saantim.

This means: "The world is nothing but a creation of *sankalpas*—it exists only in our imagination, cogitation and rumination. Rid of *sankalpas* (these useless imaginations), the notion of sorrow and pleasure will go and you will have more of *samabhava*, more of *ananda*. The mind of a *samsarin* (worldly man) is nothing but a bundle of *sankalpas*. Throw them away. When *sankalpas* go away, the *nirvikalpa* state comes and you have abiding *santi*.

How true it is! How much time we waste in idly building castles in the air! We get involved in them to such an extent that we unconsciously create for ourselves a mesh of *sukha* and *dukkha* from which we are unable to extricate ourselves and consequently we suffer. There is another *sloka* in the *Yogavasistha*, portraying the life of an ordinary man of the world and the correct relation he should maintain towards the external world.

इतो न्यतश्चोपगतामुधैव समानसंकेतनिबद्धभावाः ।

यात्रासमासंगसमा नराणां कलत्रमित्रव्यवहारमाया ॥

Itonyataschopagataamudhaiva

samaanasanketanibaddhabhaavaah,

Yaatraasamaasangasamaa naraanaam

kalatramitravyavahaaramaayaa.

We think we have to amass wealth and bequeath it to our children. We want to regulate the lives of our children. How far can we do that? Look back and see. Are you what you are because of what your father provided for you, or because of your own effort, or because of an infinitely greater force operating unseen—the force of

karma? It is this force of *karma* which has selected for us the very family we are born in. Each one is born to fulfil one's own destiny, as far as our physical life is concerned. To the same parents there are born many children and all will not develop in the same way. No two people are the same. You are one factor and your wife another factor in fulfilling your children's destinies. Similarly for fulfilling your own *karma*, the children are some more factors. Live in that attitude. Do not go further and think that you can do with the children as you like. Do not have *sankalpas* about their future. Do your duty and think about to-day alone.

Life is like a train journey. You get into the train at Victoria Terminus, bound for Madras. At Kalyan, Poona, Raichur, and other stations, some people get into the same compartment and all of you travel together. You start talking, discussing things and a sort of friendship develops. Before the day has ended, you are fairly good friends. Now at a station before Madras, one of them gets down. You do not have any particular regret that he has left you. What made you friends? Your being together under the same circumstances. Because you were in the same compartment in the same set of circumstances, temporarily you were having a life together. What was his life before he came into your compartment, you do not know. Similarly he does not know what was your life before he met you. The operating factor before this experience of togetherness was the ticket. His ticket was from Poona to Arkonam. As soon as his destination is reached, he leaves you. You may not see him again. Both of you shared the same life for a short time, that is all. Just because of that, you cannot start regulating his

life. This should be your attitude towards your family and the world. Your wife, your children and you are in the same family only temporarily, each one to fulfil his or her own destiny. You do not know what the life of your wife was before you married her. Yet you think you have a right over her now. Your attitude should be that each one in the family is born to fulfil his or her own *karma*. This *karma* is the ticket we hold in this life's journey. So, as long as we are together, our attitude should be: "Let me not do them any harm. Let me help the others as much as possible." Each one has to benefit by this life, and has to leave, however strong one's attachments may be, as soon as one's destiny is fulfilled. After your wife's ticket is over, she is going to leave you. After your ticket is over, you are going to leave the world. There should be no regret over this.

In the Gita there is a *sloka*:

अव्यक्तादीनि भूतानि व्यक्तमध्यानि भारत ।

अव्यक्तनिधनान्येव तत्र का परिदेवना ॥

Avyaktaadeeni bhootaani vyaktamadhyaani Bhaarata,

Avyaktanidhanaanyeva tatra kaa paridevanaa.

When a child is born, you do not know its origin, that is, where it has come from. When the child has grown into an adult and then dies, you do not know where he is going. In between this beginning and end, there is a short duration when he is visible and tangible, when you are connected with him. This short, transient phase, you mistake for the permanent one, whereas the intangible phase in his life (before he was born and after his death) extends into infinity and is his true state.

Not knowing this, we think this short, temporary life on this earth is all that is. So we make elaborate plans and build up our lives with the limited view of making this life as pleasurable as possible. There is a beautiful *sloka* about man's preoccupation with what he considers "his" in this life.

कान्ता इमे मे तनया इमे मे
गृहा इमे मे पशवस्त्विमे मे ।
एवं नरो मेषसमानरूपः
मे मे कृतः कालवृकेण नीतः ॥

*Kaantaa ime me tanayaa ime me,
Grihaa ime me pasavastvime me,
Evam naro meshasamaanaroopah,
Me me kritah kaalavrikena neetah.*

He thinks: "This wife is mine; these daughters and sons are mine: this house is mine and these cattle are mine." Overwhelmed by these thoughts, he says "me, me" which means "mine, mine", like a goat, hearing which the wolf in the form of *kala* (death) comes and snatches him off! Of what avail are his material possessions to him now!

Man dissipates his energies—mental and physical—trying to amass more and more things for himself and in the end dies without contentment. Instead of too much love and affection for the worldly things clouding his mind, he should use the opportunity of this life to transcend the fleeting joys and sorrows by cultivating *samabhava*.

Bringing about *samabhava* is the final aim of all religions. The very purpose of a temple is to bring about serenity of mind. In the temple, the mind experiences a degree of calmness and equanimity. This is brought out partly by the atmosphere—the chanting of *slokas*, ringing of bells, burning of incense and so on. Thoughts subside. We forget *sukha* and *dukkha*. Our day-to-day worries and anxieties are temporarily forgotten. The mind is calm. The effect is serenity. We must have this serenity not only in temples but everywhere, in all places, at all times. For the wife, the kitchen; for the ordinary man, the office and home are all temples to cultivate *samabhava*. Wherever attraction and repulsion occur, whenever *sukha* and *dukkha* hit you, try to keep an equanimous mind. Krishna says: “Only those who are free from the ignorance created by the delusion of the pairs of opposites (*sukha* and *dukkha*) can attain me, the Supreme Self.”

So change your attitude and shift your values right now. Be in the world but remain untouched by it, like a lotus leaf in water.

Vedanta, the art of self-perfection is very very easy. You need not exert yourself. There is no stress or strain. You can march forward without adjusting the existing circumstances. You alone can do it. Another cannot do it for you. He can at best give you a broad hint as to the method of cultivating it. Vedanta is self-cultivation, self-perfection, and need not bring about any conspicuous outward change. You need not run away from your duties and your home. Vedanta never advises you to run away from life and its responsibilities. For this, you need not undo anything in your life. Wherever you

betake yourself, your body will also have to go and consequently you will have *sukha* and *dukkha*. Running away from one particular set of circumstances will not do good. Instead, remain in the family and take care of it. Do the work presented before you to the best of your ability. But do not preoccupy your mind with imaginary fears, apprehensions, worries and anxieties. Live from moment to moment. Mind to-day alone. Do not worry about tomorrow. Be right where you are and raise yourself up spiritually.

Do not be like fowls. They will walk here and there in a zig-zag way, being always afraid of everything. They will go to any rubbish and be satisfied with the dirt and the worms there. This is the lot of the ordinary worldly man. Always afraid of death, he has no discrimination and thinks that the rubbish of worldly attachments and anxieties is everything. Instead, knowing the secret of Vedanta, be light and soar high like the skylark, and get a bird's-eye-view of things properly from above.

Even when a little measure of *samabhava* is cultivated, there are some very direct results obtaining in a man's secular and spiritual life. The more you are unaffected, the more can you operate the free mind, purposefully. In such an unaffected mind, God will be reflected more and more and your progress towards God will be much quicker. Less and less *raga* and *dwesha* come out of such a person. He develops intuition, moreover. He would face his duties calmly without getting agitated. The mind and intellect are clearer because of less and less agitations and tossings. Consequently he can come to quick, correct decisions.

You can see the opposite every day, everywhere. There are some officers who are for ever agitated and ruffled. Ever in a bad temper, they are confused and cannot solve any problem, in office or in their homes. If you go to them with any problem of your own, they will impart their irritation and confusion to you and you will be no wiser in arriving at a solution to the problem. The reason can only be that the officer is torn by his own anxieties and fears, *sankalpas*. He is not able to work dispassionately, with a clear mind.

On the other hand, there are some officers who are responsible for big undertakings or projects. They are always calm, serene and easily approachable. Be sure that this is because they are having *samabhava* in a more or less measure. As a result, their perspicacity and penetrating power are acute and they can solve any problem in no time. Though they have big responsibilities they are able to carry them lightly. The first requisite of any successful man is an undisturbed and unconfused mind. Anybody coming in contact with him in his dealings is impressed, for a mind that is unconfused imparts joy, equanimity and serenity to others.

Why do people visit *sannyasins*? Because, if he be a true *sannyasin*, he will be serene and tranquil and will impart the same qualities to those coming in contact with him. Sorrow is contagious. Pleasure is contagious. So also serenity is contagious and this is what everyone is after, fundamentally.

What is required is not so much of education and university degrees but serenity. The greatest people were those that had this serenity and unperturbed state within, and not just university degrees. Whatever problems are presented before them, they are immediately

solved. So, if you cultivate *samabhava*, by and by, genius will originate there. A mirror covered by dirt cannot reflect. The moment dirt is removed it reflects perfectly. So also a mind clouded by thoughts and worries cannot judge things properly. The moment it becomes free from these disturbing thoughts and anxieties, it shines in its brilliancy. So, even having in view the mere success in the secular life, one must cultivate *samabhava*.

Any anxiety and undue worry occupies the mind only because there is a strong negative aspect in it which negates your very aspiration. If you say: "Oh! my daughter should be married soon" and worry about it unduly, it only indicates that you are having a strong fear that your daughter will not be married soon. Just think. Is it not true? A man who is confident that he can get his daughter married—will he worry so much? Whenever there is a strong desire in you, then understand, there is an equally strong negative thought in you that your desire will not be fulfilled. So remove both these forces, for any idea or thought emanating from such an agitated mind, torn between opposing forces, will never be successful. Any thought coming in an equanimous, pure mind is a thousand times more powerful than a thought originating in a mind confused by *raga* or *dwesha*. It will have such a mighty force. This is the force of real prayer. When we are offering our prayers, sometimes a state comes where, for a fragmentary moment, our mind is free from *raga* and *dwesha*. It remains thoughtless and serene. Now, if we have had a desire or want just before we attained this serene state, that desire gets fulfilled by the mighty force created by the serene mind. This is what we mean by saying: "My prayer is fulfilled."

Actually the wish is fulfilled not by your wishing it; in fact it cannot be fulfilled as long as you keep the mind engaged in wishing. But it is fulfilled the moment you actually stop wishing and the mind is calm and serene. If there is so much force in a mind remaining tranquil and serene for a fragmentary moment, how much more force must there be in a mind which is constantly in such a state! If you can keep the mind perfectly thoughtless and serene, how much more perfect and fulfilled your life will be, how much more happy and accomplished you will be!

So, start cultivating *samabhava* immediately. Today you may fail in ninety-nine instances, but may be successful in one. The next day, you may fail in ninety-five and succeed in five. After ten months or a year you will succeed in seventy-five per cent of the cases. This itself will give you a serene mind. All possible intellectual strength will sprout upon it. All virtues, all glorious qualities will start growing in you. A ripe jack fruit needs no advertisement to invite the flies. So also when you become spiritually ripe by cultivating equanimity, everything good naturally flows towards you.

It is an eternal law of nature that *like attracts like*. A pick-pocket coming to Bombay would come into contact with most of the pick-pockets already there, within two days. A *sannyasin* coming will very soon come in touch with persons of his bent of mind. Gods attract gods and devils attract devils. So, as you progress in goodness, everything good comes to you automatically. What difficulties you were having before, vanish of their own accord.

Moreover, you will find that you are unconsciously imparting this spirit (of equanimity and goodness) to

others around you—your wife, children, friends and colleagues. Goodness is as contagious as badness.

If you are serene and calm, everyone will like you. When a man becomes good, the tendencies in those around him will at first be to pull him down again to their own level. But if you stand like a rock and refuse to be pulled down, they will start slowly imitating you. In this way, if you improve, the whole family will improve.

Mahatma Gandhi, Vinoba Bhave and some western people who have earned a name for themselves, all owe their greatness to *samabhava*. Westerners may not know it, but somehow some of them have stumbled upon this *samabhava*. With *samabhava* a pigmy can become a giant.

Suppose you have a small boat and want to cross the ocean. Even that is possible if the sides of the boat are intact. But if there is even a single hole on one side, water will rush in and the boat will capsize. Even when there is no hole, the water is pressing on all sides of the boat, but it cannot enter into it.

Similarly the world is full of *sukha* and *dukkha* even as the ocean is full of water. But, as long as you keep your mind fortified with *samabhava*, as long as you do not develop a leak, it cannot enter into your heart and create havoc. Once you allow a hole to form there, the world will rush in with its *sukha* and *dukkha* and drown you in your own mental chaos. So keep the mind safe, without a hole, by means of *samabhava*. Then the world may hit you with *sukha* and *dukkha* but they will beat a retreat with regret. Be definite about it.

By and by, you will reach a state where any difficulty will only uplift you and not afflict you. You will be in

a position to say: “Let anything happen in my life. Even if atom bombs be dropped, I will be ready for it. My vision is not external, but is turned within. God is everywhere. I have no enemy or friend. Each and every one is a representation of the one Infinite Self.”

There is a *sloka* in Yogavasishtha where Vasishtha tells Rama:—

परमपावनया हिमशीतया
समतया मतयात्मविदामपि ।
शमितयाऽमितयान्तरहन्तया
यदवशिष्टमजं पदमस्तु तत् ॥

*Paramapaavanayaa himaseetayaa,
Samatayaa matayaatmavidaamapi,
Samitayaamitayaantarahantayaa,
Yadavasishtamajam padamastu tat.*

“O Rama! it is the opinion of all the *Brahmajnanis* that there is only one method to attain *Brahmajnana* namely, equanimity (samata).”

How delicious will a glass of cool *sherbab* be when you have walked a long distance on a hot day, exposed to the midday Sun! Equally soothing is equanimity to a mind which is exposed to *sukha* and *dukkha*, is tossed, heated and troubled with desires and disappointments. Outlive *raga*, *dvesha*, *sukha* and *dukkha* and cultivate *samabhava*. Then little by little the ‘I’ and ‘My’ feelings, the twin children of the ego, will disappear. Then the mind itself will die completely, and along with it the ego also meets its death. Then and then only will you realise your true Self, *satchidananda*.

It is a wonder that though there is such a marvellous philosophy to guide our lives, people are not taking to it. There is a *sloka* in the Bhagawad Gita:

आश्चर्यवत्पश्यति कश्चिदेन आश्चर्यवद्ब्रूति तथैव चान्यः ।
आश्चर्यवच्चैनमन्यः शृणोति श्रुत्वाऽप्येन वेद न चैव कश्चित् ॥

Aascharyavat pasyati kaschidenam,
Aascharyavat vadati tathaiva chaanyah;
Aascharyavachchainamanyah srinoti,
srutvaapyenam veda na chaiva kaschit.

“Is it not a great wonder, that very few people try to understand this great system of philosophy? Even of those few who have understood it and realised, very few try to come forth and discuss it with the common people. Is that not a greater wonder? Even if a few of these realised souls come out and tell people of their experience and the path to it, very few care to hear it. And of even those who hear and understand that this is the only *tatva* capable of giving permanent *ananda* to human beings, a very rare few try to put it into practice and realise. Is this not the greatest wonder of all?”

Chapter 6

SAMKHYA YOGA AND KARMA YOGA

Reality according to Vedanta is that which undergoes no change, that which existed in the past, exists at present and will exist in future, for you, me and everybody. Truth cannot betray itself. Then, can the world be called real? No, because it is constantly changing and betraying itself. The world has every possible validity, but no reality. Validity means, it has the capacity to make itself felt as real. A dream also has validity, because it makes us believe it to be true when we are in that dream state but it has no reality, because it ceases to exist as soon as we wake up. Similarly the world will also cease to exist as soon as we wake up from this state of ignorance into a state of self-realisation. Anything in this world, whether *jada* or *chetana*, insentient or sentient, inert or animated, man or animal, is subject to change. Can they be called real? Your wife, children, office and others are all valid for you, but they are not real.

Krishna says:

नासतो विद्यते भावो नाभावो विद्यते सतः ।

उभयोरपि दृष्टोऽन्तस्त्वनयोस्तत्त्वदर्शिभिः ॥

*Naasato vidyate bhaavo naabhaavo vidyate satah,
Ubhayorapi drishtontastvanayoh tatvadarsibhih.*

“Great souls have said: What actually does not exist in reality, has no true existence (the unreal has no existence) and what is real cannot cease to exist.”

How then are our *sukha* and *dukkha* real? They are *agamapaayinah*, they come and go. They come for going and go for coming back. They are transient and hence unreal. Is it worthwhile to complain and worry about them? Neither *sukha* nor *dukkha* is going to be a permanent feature. Then why rejoice at the one and mourn the other? Sustain both *sukha* and *dukkha* with the same equanimity in the mind. Do not attach yourself to the unreal which by its very nature is transient, short-lived. Instead, attach yourself to that one Reality which is non-changing, immutable, eternal and immortal. Do you regret or rejoice about your dreams? No. Because the *sukha* and *dukkha* of the dreams are short-lived and completely vanish on your waking. So also the *sukha* and *dukkha* which seem to be so real now, are only temporary and will pass off into nothingness in the future. So why worry about them? Just sustain them. Do not complain.

Samabhava towards *sukha* and *dukkha* will not automatically come on hearing these discourses. It will come only through *abhyasa* (practice). Even for ordinary acts like talking, eating, walking, singing and reading, we have to practise for years. What to say about *Brahma-jnana*? Can it be acquired and perfected in a matter of minutes or hours? Corresponding to the amount of *abhyasa* you do, you will develop *samabhava*. And the *ananda* you get, will be in direct proportion to the degree of *samabhava* you cultivate. So, only through sincere *abhyasa* can you get abiding joy. Rama asks Vasishtha:

“Is it possible for the worldly man to go beyond *sukha* and *dukkha*?” Vasishtha says “Yes” and sets out a series of examples:

तंडुलस्य यथा चर्म यथा ताम्रस्य कालिमा ।

नश्यति क्रियया पुत्र पुरुषस्य तथा मलः ॥

*Tandulasya yathaa charma yathaa taamrasya kaalimaa,
Nasyati kriyayaa putra purushasya tathaa malah.*

“O Rama, we cook rice and eat it. But do you know how the husk was first removed from the rice? The rice was taken out of the paddy, not by pounding once or twice. It was pounded thousands of times. Even a grain of rice cannot be extracted out of paddy without a certain effort and a particular process. Can the husk of *ajnana* be removed without effort?

“To clean a dirty copper plate we first smear it with tamarind, then rub it well with ash and then wash it. Only then is the dirt removed and it shines with its gold-like brilliance. So also only by proper understanding and the necessary effort can the dirt in our hearts be removed.”

To remove oil completely from a pot, in which it had been kept for a long time, it is not enough if the pot is merely washed with soap and water. First the pot must be treated with soda and boiled. Then it must be washed with soap and water. So also burn the impurity in your heart with Vedantic knowledge and *viveka* (discrimination).

Purge yourself of all impurities with proper Vedantic knowledge and emerge with a heart shining with purity. Each and every one of you is a veritable god, living on the surface of this earth. This is the thundering claim of

Vedanta. Realise it. Follow it. I know by personal experience that the assurances for uplifting man contained in the *sastras* are absolutely true. I am showing you the very same process which I myself thought would be difficult, but actually found very easy. Unlike the western scientists who have started a study of the universe by its external features, our ancient seers intuitively grasped the idea, 'That Thou Art' viz. what you see outside as the world and what you perceive within yourself as mind are one. So to study the universe, they conducted an inner psychological research and discovered that the very source of the mind and the universe is that Pure Consciousness, *Satchidananda*. These seers understood what was real and what was unreal. They pondered over such questions as "What is there behind this unreality? How can you say that there is an eternal omnipotent Reality behind the changing world? What or who is God? How do we say that the world was created?"

Take this blackboard, for instance. It is valid enough, but is it real? Will it remain under all conditions without falsifying its existence? Burn it. It is reduced to ashes. Originally, it was timber, which then was cut into pieces, joined and it became the blackboard. So a tree changed its *nama* and *roopa* (name and form) to become the blackboard, which turns into ashes on being burnt. Split the ashes and go on analysing—you will get molecules and atoms which can be further split into electrons and neutrons. According to the western scientists it finally becomes invisible rays. Oriental philosophers called this 'pure energy'. This cannot further be disintegrated or split up. So take anything and everything in this world and analyse; it invariably gets reduced to pure

energy. This is the ultimate existence from which everything has originated. Matter is nothing but condensed energy. This pure energy, otherwise called ultimate existence or *satta*, has the capacity to change itself into various names and forms, though it is itself nameless and formless. According to the changing name and form, our understanding of it also changes, that is, the mental process inside us also undergoes changes. The blackboard outside and the blackboard understanding within me are concomitant, co-existent. The origin of both the gross blackboard outside and the idea “blackboard” inside, is one and the same—pure existence. When light passes through various coloured glasses, it seems to be differently coloured, yet it is the same light. Similarly, the same *satta* expresses itself through various names and forms and this is what we see as the world. This is what Vedanta means by saying: ‘The world as world is unreal, but as *Brahman*, is real.’ So the supreme knowledge of the universe can be had by a real understanding of this pure *satta* and this understanding can be had only by merging ourselves in that Pure Existence and realising our identity with that non-changing, immutable, eternal Reality. When you land on this pure existence you get pure *ananda*, the *Satchidananda*. *Iswara*, *Brahman*, *Atman* are all one with and inseparable from *Satchidananda*, just as the heating, lighting and burning capacity are inseparable from fire. *Brahman* in its original pristine glory is *Satchidananda*. *Krishna* declares:

अविनाशि तु तद्विद्धि येन सर्वमिदं ततम् ।

विनाशमव्ययस्यास्य न कश्चित्कर्तुमर्हति ॥

*Avinaasi tu tadviddhi yena sarvamidam tatam,
Vinaasamavyayasyaasya na kaschitkartum arhati*

“That principle which transcends, permeates, and exists in and through everything in this perceptible world—know that principle to be the ultimate existence, changeless and immutable. None has power to destroy this indestructible Reality.” This infinite principle within us is the non-changing substratum on which the movement called mind occurs. This moving thing or movements is not really separate from the non-moving substratum. Nobody can spoil or destroy this non-changing Reality. Sankara says: “Even God cannot change that;” because God is that very Reality. Our aim should be to make this life serve its purpose by attaining realisation—union with the Ultimate Reality, Pure Consciousness, Pure Existence. Make the world open your eyes of wisdom and let human birth prove itself a boon. How are we to do it? Krishna shows us the way:

सुखदुःखे समे कृत्वा लाभालाभौ जयाजयौ ।
ततो युद्धाय युज्यस्व नैवं पापमवाप्स्यसि ॥

*Sukhadukkhe same kritvaa laabhaalaabhau jayaajayau
Tato yuddhaaya yujyasva naivam paapamavaapsyasi.*

Krishna is giving here the secret of right living. “Have equanimity towards *sukha* and *dukkha*. Have *sama bhava*, whether you have gain or loss in worldly possessions. Don’t be overjoyed by gains or dejected by losses. Cultivate *samabhava* whether you win or lose in tackling the problems of your life. Let not success inflate you nor failure pull you down. Having determined to act

thus, you fight on in the battlefield of life. Then you will not have any *paapa* accruing from it.”

The term *paapa* or sin has to be understood very thoroughly. Christians call themselves sinners. Vedantins consider everyone as verily ‘*Brahman*.’

What is the reason behind our wanting to avoid *paapa*? It is the fear that doing *paapa* will bring us a *dukkha*. We want to do *punya* or meritorious acts because we think it will give us *sukha*. So our doing *paapa* or *punya* can only affect us by creating in us *sukha* or *dukkha*. Krishna says: “Do not care for *paapa* or *punya*, for, once you have cultivated *samabhava*, they cannot affect you. Through *samabhava* attain Me, the Infinite Principle. *Samabhava* will protect you against all sins.” A man of *samabhava* will not be an evil-doer.

Just think how logical this is. Ordinary people are full of notions of *paapa* or *punya*. They say: “We are *paapins* (sinners). We are mundane people,” not knowing that *paapa* or *punya* will affect them only as long as they let these affect them. Outlive *sukha* and *dukkha* right now. Will *paapa* or *punya*, which are going to give you *sukha* or *dukkha* in future, affect you then? If you have once learnt swimming, why should you be afraid of entering water? So *paapa* and *punya* are for us only as long as we let ourselves be swayed by *sukha* and *dukkha*, *raga* and *dvesha*. Once we have cultivated equanimity (*samabhava*) it means we have transcended *paapa* and *punya*.

Krishna says further:

एषा तेऽभिहिता सांख्ये बुद्धिर्योगे त्विमां शृणु ।

बुद्ध्या युक्तो यया पार्थ कर्मबन्धं प्रहास्यसि ॥

*Eshaa tebhihitaa saamkhye buddhiryoge tvimaam srinu,
Budāhyaa yukto yayaa Paartha karmabandham prahaasyasi.*

“What all I have taught you till now, is to make you understand clearly what the aim and purpose of your life should be. This is the wisdom of *samkhya*. Now I am going to tell you the practical way to fulfil your life through right actions. This is the technique of *karma yoga*, following which you will cut off all the existing bonds of *karma bhandā*. Theoretical Vedanta alone will not help us, just as a cow in a picture will not yield us milk. To realise our aim of merging with the *Brahman*, we have to saturate our actions, nay, even our breath, with Vedanta. This is the way of *karma yoga*; that of converting theory into practice. Till now we were working with *raga* and *dwesha*. We wanted to get a certain result which will bring *sukha* to us. This was the reason why we undertook any work. But now convert this action into *karma yoga*, by inner adaptation and change. Throw away all selfishness. Do not be attached to *sukha* and *dukkha* and *raga* and *dwesha*. Do all work in a spirit of dedication unto the Supreme. Then every *karma* you do becomes *dharma*. You would have a goal or aim when commencing an action, but once started, the work must be for its own sake. Do not cling to the result. Then you will get peace and joy out of the very performance of the work. Whether the action brings its desired result or not, it does not matter. You will not be affected either by success or failure in your action. Your mind will not be confused and the actions done with such a clear mind will be a hundred times more effective than actions done with a mind confused due to attachment to the result. “So Arjuna, convert your actions (*karmas*) into *karma*

yoga. Then, from you will flow out actions that will prove beneficial not only to you, but to the society as well." Krishna, after explaining all along to Arjuna the wisdom of *samkhya yoga*, is now asking him to do *karma yoga*.

So the question arises in our minds: which is the path for us—*samkhya yoga* or *karma yoga*? Before going further I want to clarify who are fit for *Jnananishtha*, *Brahmanishtha*, that is, the path of *samkhya yoga*, and who are fit for *karmayoga anusuthana*, that is, to follow the path of *karmayoga*.

Karma yoga is meant for *ā karmi*.

A *Karmi* is a man who thinks he can derive pleasure from objects of the external world. He works motivated by desires and thinks by amassing wealth he can increase his *sukha*. He is attached to the world. Slowly he comes to understand: "However much I amass wealth, I cannot get lasting, abiding joy. The objects of the outside world being perishable, the joy I will get from them will also be only *naswara* (perishable and impermanent)." He has understood this *tatva*, yet his clinging has not gone. He has a little knowledge of the Vedanta and wants to get real joy, *ananda*. Yet, he has duty-consciousness and thinks: "I must do this. I must do that." Such people are fit only for *karma yoga*. Henceforth they must transform their *karma* into *karma yoga*. What they were doing hitherto with desire, they should now start doing without desire.

On the other hand, there are people who on reading books on Vedanta or hearing such talks, start mentally analysing the world. They come to the conclusion,

sooner or later, that life in the world is of no avail. Such a one thinks: "All things of the world will give me ultimately only displeasure or at best temporary joy. At every turn the world betrays me." They see the futility of hankering after worldly joys and want to have nothing to do with the material world. They have no more duty-consciousness nor have they any attachment either to particular persons or to the objects of the world. To them the world will seem just like a cinema show.

Having no more duty-consciousness or attachment and coming to the conclusion that *Mukti* through *Jnana* alone can give them lasting peace, they betake themselves away from society. It is no use anybody's saying: "Don't go away. Don't run away. You have such and such a duty to perform." They will not hear them. To some people this *vairagya* may come spontaneously on hearing or reading Vedanta. To some it takes time, but once this *vairagya* has taken root, the world loses all charm for them. This genuine *vairagya* is not born out of mere frustration. Some people get disappointed in love affairs, some fail in examinations, some lose their near and dear ones and, in their immediate sorrow, will feel that the world has nothing to offer them. They have a sort of *vairagya* which is short-lived. It is actually disgust and not *vairagya*, educated dispassion.

But people of real *vairagya* have not come to their determination because of a temporary disillusionment, but by rationally analysing and calmly thinking over the impermanency of the worldly life. They are convinced of the utter uselessness of mundane life. Reinforced with Vedantic knowledge, unattached, without the idea of "I must do this, I must do that", without duty-consciousness,

they reach a decision that they must acquire *Jnana*, *Mukti* or die in the process. Only such people are fit for *samkhya yoga* or *jnana yoga*.

Before Krishna's time, most of the people who attained *Brahma jnana* were *samkhya yogis*. After their fifty-fifth year or so, most of the men retired to the forests, along with their wives, if they too were of a kindred disposition and started meditating to attain *Brahma jnana*. So the Vedas and Upanishads remained mostly confined to the jungles where the *rishis* lived. Very few lived on in the world as *karma yogis*. A few kings like Janaka, after assimilating this *tatwa*, put it into practice as *karma yogis* and attained the knowledge of the Supreme. But it was Krishna who brought this *tatwa* to the ordinary worldly man. He proclaimed that what those people, retiring to the forests and disassociating with worldly life attained, you can also attain by remaining right here by making this *tatwa* of *karma yoga* saturate your life. He declares:

यत् सांख्यैः प्राप्यते स्थानं तत् योगैरपि गम्यते ।

एकं सांख्यं च योगं च यः पश्यति स पश्यति ॥

*Ya: saamkhyaih praapyate sthaanam tat yogairapi gamyate,
Ekam saamkhyam cha yogam cha yah pasyati sa pasyati.*

What *sthana*, state or stature, the *samkhya yogis* attain (*prapyate*) directly, the very same *sthana* the *Karma Yogis* also (*gamyate*) attain in due course. *Prapyate* signifies attaining directly, quickly. *Gamyate* means attaining in a slower and gradual way. Because *samkhya yogis* have no more attachment, they will perform only the minimum actions necessary for the maintenance of their body and will leave off all other actions. They directly and quickly

cover the path of realisation like a bird flying directly from one tree to another. Whereas the *karma yogi*, although he knows Vedanta, is yet not able to disassociate himself from the world and is not rid of duty-consciousness. For him *karma yoga* is the way and by this he attains the Supreme, though a little slowly. In short *samkhya yogis* are Vedantins in toto and *karma yogins*, are only half Vedantins. So the difference is only in degree and not in essence. He who is able to perceive the same principle in both the *yogas*, that is, he who is able to analyse and understand that *samkhya* and *karma yogas* are one, which differ only in degree, alone understands Vedanta properly. You will be surprised to know that even today there are many people of the *samkhya yogi* type, who remain detached and do meditation for *Moksha*.

There are certain people who take to *sannyasa*, because of some disappointment or sorrow, but are not really able to detach themselves from worldly fetters. They are neither *samkhya yogis*, in spite of their garb, nor are they *karma yogis*. There is yet another type of people who remain in the world as any other ordinary man, with their families and office responsibilities; yet they work on with a changed inner attitude, without selfishness and attachment. They are *karma yogis*. To what type one man belongs, another man cannot say. What your attitude is, whether you are fit for *karma yoga* or *samkhya yoga*, can be understood only by yourself.

What is the difference between the actions of a *samkhya yogi* and a *karmi*?

नैव किञ्चित् करोमीति युक्तो मन्येत तत्त्ववित् ।

पश्यञ्शृण्वन्स्पृशञ्जिघ्रन्तश्नग्च्छन्स्वपञ्श्वसन् ॥

Naiva kinchit karomeeti yukto manyeta tatvavit,

Pasyansrinvasprisanjighrannasngachchhansvapansvasan.

Samkhya yogins also go on acting. But whenever they act, they do not attach themselves to their body and mind, but they do everything with their sight fixed on their inner Consciousness, inner Reality, the inner Perceiver, the inner Self, which is ever present, which undergoes no change and which does not experience any *sukha* or *dukkha*.

To a *samkhya yogi*, whether his body acts or the body of another man acts, both are equally objective. Whether his mind thinks or the mind of another man thinks, both are equally viewed by him as being outside himself.

He has understood Vedanta and is rooted in the conviction "I am not acting." He may be looking, hearing, tasting, smelling or touching (feeling with his skin); he may be breathing, eating or sleeping, but all through these actions he has the feeling: "It is the body which acts, not I. My *indriyas* are associating themselves with their *vishayas*, objects of the external world. I am not the actor." He is ever conscious that outwardly everything changes and mentally also everything changes. In these changing phenomena of the world, there is only one principle that does not undergo any change. That is the inner Perceiver, the pure "I consciousness", that witnesses and illuminates the three states of consciousness, the "I" that never acts, moves, comes or goes, that "I" which is not associated with the body or mind (though we mistakenly think it does). He remains always in the thought *Nitya suddha Prabuddhoham, Satchidananda-svarupoham*. Thus dwelling on that consciousness continuously, he attains union with It.

The *karmi*, on the other hand, thinks that “he” is acting when his body or mind acts. He is not able to disassociate himself from the idea that he is the body-mind-intellect entity. And when the attachment to the body and mind is there, there also springs up the *ahamkara*, the ego, that “I did this, I will do that”. Consequently he experiences *sukha* and *dukkha*, suffers joys and sorrows, pleasure and pain. For such people Vedanta gives the intermediary process of *karma yoga* by which they can evolve. This practical science of philosophy, *karma yoga*, was given out publicly for the first time by Krishna to Arjuna.

Chapter 7

KARMA YOGA — I

When Krishna tells Arjuna to convert his *karma*, action, into *karma yoga*, Arjuna has a pertinent doubt as to whether the *karma* which Krishna is enjoining him to do is just another type of ritual, or a secular process, or technique of doing his jobs. - In his mind arises the fear as to whether they (the new *karmas*) might not also be subject to the usual obstacles in performing them and if these hindrances will not bring fresh *karma bandha*, bondage. The obstacles that Arjuna has in his mind are: *abhikramanasa* and *pratyavaya*.

A farmer ploughs the fields, sows the seeds, waters and replants the seedlings; in short he does everything that is to be done for a good harvest. Just before he reaps and takes the paddy to the barn, torrential rains come and destroy the whole crop. In the hope of getting this harvest, he had worked for three to four months. The progress was orderly till the last, but suddenly due to an unforeseen circumstance, all his efforts came to naught. This type of obstacle is called *abhikramanasa*, the complete perishing of a nearly completed job. A father raises up his son lovingly, gives him good education in the hope that he will turn out to be a useful citizen of the country. The young man falls into evil company, and becomes a disgrace to his parents. Here the result that you get is just the opposite of what you

expected to get. This is *pratyavaya*. Any secular or ritualistic action is often subject to these obstacles. From Valmiki Ramayana, I will cite one instance each of *abhikramanasa* and *pratyavaya*.

Lakshmana and Indrajit were fighting valiantly for a number of days with none in sight of victory. One day during the fight, Indrajit suddenly disappeared and did not turn up for some days. Rama's people were wondering what had happened to Indrajit. Vibhishana said that Indrajit must have started a *yaga* to attain some mighty power, reinforced with which, he would be invincible. So unless the *yaga* was obstructed immediately, Lakshmana stood no chance of winning over Indrajit. So Hanuman and his team of monkeys went to the *yaga sala* (place where Indrajit was performing *yaga*), challenged Indrajit for a fight and succeeded in obstructing the *yaga*.

All the efforts which Indrajit had put in for the past many days were thus wasted. This is *abhikramanasa* and any ritualistic or secular action is subject to it.

Kumbhakarna was doing *tapas* with the idea of asking Brahma: "By my mere willing, *devas* should perish. There should not be any *devas* left, *nirdevatwa*." The *devas* divined his thoughts, went to Goddess Saraswathi and asked her to help them in some way. So when Brahma appeared, instead of saying *nirdevatwa*, Saraswathi made him say *nidravatva* which means 'eternal sleepiness'. The result which Kumbhakarna attained was entirely the opposite of what he wanted. This is *pratyavaya*.

Any action being often subject to these two hindrances, Arjuna has a doubt that the action that Krishna might prescribe may also lead to such contrary results.

Krishna clears his doubt by the following *sloka*:

नेहाभिक्रमनाशोऽस्ति प्रत्यवायो न विद्यते ।

स्वलपमप्यस्य धर्मस्य त्रायते महतो भयात् ॥

*Nehaabhikramanaasosti pratyavaayo na vidyate,
Svalpamapyasya dharmasya traayate mahato bhayaat.*

“Arjuna, the method I am prescribing to you is absolutely free from the above obstacles. It is not a new system of *karma*, but a new type of *Dharma*. The very *karma* which otherwise binds you, may, by a change in the inner attitude, be made to liberate you from the chain of births and deaths. Even a little bit of this *Dharma*, when practised, releases you from the greatest fear of poverty, disease and death, in short, all worldly afflictions.”

Whatever actions we perform fixing our aim on *Moksha*, are reinforced by an invisible power. When we no longer cling to the result, our minds become clearer and clearer. There is no conflict and confusion here. Because the mind is clear, the actions emerging from us are a hundred times more effective. As you go on practising, you will realise the improvement in the very nature of your actions. Not only are your material and secular lives made happier and fruitful, but each day brings you nearer to *Moksha*. Krishna says: “It is not a new action or a new ritual that I am asking you to do; but do the same action as you have been doing hitherto without attachment. Attachment to the result reduces your efficiency. You are now engaged in a *dharma yuddha*, righteous war. Make this very battlefield a *yajnasala* by offering all your actions unto the Supreme Being. Have *samabhava*, outlive *sukha* and *dukkha*. You are upset now

by *bhaya*, fear, arising out of the clinging you have for the result. A clear idea of the objective you aim at must be there in your mind, as: 'I must remove the evil Duryodhana and his wicked brothers, from the face of earth.' But do not have an attachment to the result. Then what is now bothering you, will cease to bother you." Krishna is giving this message not only to Arjuna, but to every man and woman facing the battle of life. For each and every one the world is a laboratory to experiment on Vedanta. You will see that the very obstacles prove helpful to you. Whether one is a scavenger cleaning the streets, a mother in the kitchen, a servant, a clerk or a businessman, one can become a *karma yogi*. Start converting the very *karma* you are performing into *karma yoga*. Life in the world will then be a blessing in disguise to you. Don't forget the Vedantic secret that *phalachinta*, thought of the result of action, is different from *phalahi-sandhi*, attachment to the result of action. The former will be there when man or even animals and fools act. It is natural. It does not bind. But the latter is the binding adjunct. That should be removed, for that is the paining and upsetting factor.

Krishna says further:

व्यवसायात्मिका बुद्धिरेकेह कुरुनन्दन ।

बहुशाखा ह्यनन्ताश्च बुद्ध्योऽव्यवसायिनाम् ॥

Vyavasaayaatmikaa buddhirekeha Kurunandana,

Bahusakhaa hyanantaascha buddhayo avyavasaayinaam.

"In the realm of *karma yoga* the factor of prime consideration or value is *vyavasaayaatmika buddhi*, one-pointed determination. By a proper analytical approach, fix for

yourself the ultimate aim of life, as to what you are really seeking and stick to it.”

What is life? It is a succession of transient, ephemeral *sukhas* and *dukkhas*. What do you want in life? *Santi*. Are you getting it? No. How to get it? The answer is given by Vedanta which says: “Detach yourself from both *sukha* and *dukkha*, and remain in *samabhava*. *Mukti* alone will give you lasting peace. So attach yourself to the aim of *Mukti*. Determine that the purpose of life is to attain *Jivanmukti*. When this one-pointed determination has taken roots in you, about three quarters of the *karma yaga* practice is over. More than half the battle has been won. This one-pointed determination has to be acquired by properly analysing life and by reinforcing one’s wisdom with Vedantic knowledge. “In this life I am not happy. There is only one way to overcome these fleeting *sukhas* and *dukkhas*—by seeking *Mukti*. I will use this very life, which now gives me misery, for attaining *Mukti*. This determination is *vyavasayaatmika buddhi*.

Now, what is the lot of the people who do not have this one-pointed determination about the purpose of their life? Since their goal is not fixed, their *buddhi*, the determining inner factor, will be split up in so many different directions. Their energy will be wasted in pursuing various transient aims; it will drain off in different shallow channels. If you ask such a man what his aim in life is, his answer will be somewhat like this: “I have two sons. I am going to make one of them an engineer and the other a doctor. I have a daughter to be married. I am looking for a right match for her. After my sons graduate and get good jobs, I want to marry them to

girls coming from rich families. After the sons and daughter are properly settled, my wife and I will retire to the village to spend the rest of our lives quietly, peacefully." With so many different aims, all worldly, he dissipates his energy. He thinks, once he has settled all his children to his liking, he will have peace. First of all, his plans may not turn out exactly as he wants them. There is many a slip between the cup and the lip. One of his sons may not study well, the other may not obey his parents, or one may become a victim to some dreadful disease. The man will get upset by these. His old age will be spent either nursing his sick son or in licking his own mental wounds. No *santi* for him. Even supposing all his plans turn out well and he goes to the village, there also, since he has not rid himself of *raga* and *dwesha*, he will be swayed by petty likes and dislikes and selfish aims, and will have no peace. Instead of being a bird soaring high in the sky of peace, he will be brooding in his own nest of disquiet. This is the fate of every man who has no *vyavasayaatmika buddhi*, one-pointed determination, as to the aim of his life.

If he had that one-pointed determination, even if his sons did not turn out well, he would think: "*sukha* and *dukkha* are fleeting. It is impossible to have *sukha* alone. *Dukkha* must accompany it as darkness accompanies light and bad accompanies good. *Sukha* and *dukkha* are just two movements, projections, within. I must transcend them both and cultivate equanimity." Otherwise he would be afflicted and affected by his *dukkha*; but now he goes beyond them, outlives them.

So develop one-pointed determination. Make up your mind that you will attain *Mukti* in this very life and

work for it. If not you will have split aims. You try to fulfil them one by one. In ninety cases out of a hundred, they will betray you. You get upset and, instead of learning a lesson from that betrayal, you are again after another aim. It will be just a wild goose chase.

After hearing so far, Arjuna's mind becomes totally changed. He thinks within himself: "I never thought in my life that there is such a wonderful Vedantic way of living, by which I can outlive *sukha* and *dukkha*, even transcend the whole worldly life and be full of *ananda*. I must attain this *ananda*."

Krishna goes further on to say:

यावानर्थ उदपाने सर्वतः संप्लुतोदके ।

तावान्सर्वेषु वेदेषु ब्राह्मणस्य विजानतः ॥

Yaavaanartha udapaane sarvatah samplutodake,

Taavaan sarveshu vedeshu braahmanasya vijaanatah.

"O Arjuna! if you cultivate this Vedantic perfection, you will attain a state which is wonderful, transcendental. You will come to the *Brahmajnana* state. In comparison to the *ananda* accruing from it, the *ananda* that is concomitant, co-existent with that state, the pleasure that the things of the world give is very very little, infinitesimal.

"If you submerge yourself in a lake full of fresh, clear, clean water, will you require a glass or cup to draw water and drink it? Is there any necessity to store up water for use? Whenever you require to drink water, you can just open your mouth and drink directly the clean water."

So also the *Brahmajnani* is so full of *ananda*, he is such a *nityatripta* (ever contented) that he has no use for the

objects of the external world. He is so full of knowledge that there is no necessity for him to know the lesser things or lesser sciences of the every day world. He is so contented and at peace that he has no need for the ritualistic religion, which he has transcended already. He is in such a transcendental state that, compared to it, even the emperorship of the whole world is nothing. For such a one who has attained the pinnacle, the climax of *Brahmajnana*, everything in the relative world is *tuchcha*, insignificant.

There are many different interpretations of this *sloka*. I have given the one that seems the most logical and reasonable.

In the next *sloka*, Krishna gives the secret of *karma yoga*. Unfortunately this *sloka* is one of the most misinterpreted ones in the whole of the Bhagavad Gita. I am giving you the interpretation which seems to me to be the correct one. Use your own analytical mind and reason it out for yourself, whether it is right or wrong.

The *sloka* is:

कर्मण्येवाधिकारस्ते मा फलेषु कदाचन ।

मा कर्मफलहेतुर्भूर्मा ते सङ्गोऽस्त्वकर्मणि ॥

*Karmanyevaadhikaarasthe maa phaleshu kadaachana,
Maa karmaphalaheturbhoormaa te sangostvakarmani.*

Many people interpret the first line as: "You perform your actions, but you have no right to the result or fruit thereof." The crooks, thieves, black-marketeers and race-goers can use this *sloka* to justify their actions. A race-goer may go to the races, tie his money to the tail of a

horse and lose all of it.. To make his action seem right, he may say ‘*karmanyevadhikaraste*’. “You have only the right to act and not to the result thereof. So don’t worry.” So saying, he justifies his squandering away the money in the race. It is just the devil quoting the scriptures. The actions and enterprises of such people are propelled by *raga* and *dwesha*. Supposing the Bhagavad Gita gives such a system of philosophy which advises you to do your work and throw away the result, that is a dangerous Gita, useless Gita.

Sankara says in a place:

फलं अनुद्दिश्य न मन्दोपि प्रवर्तते ।

Phalam anuddisya na mandopi pravartate.

“The nature of beings is such that without thinking of the result even an idiot does not act.” Call an idiot to your house to take food. He undertakes the act of walking to your house only because he knows the result of it, that he will get food at your house. When a cow is untied from its stable for grazing, it leaves the stable, knowing that it is going to graze to fill its stomach.

When even a fool or an animal does not act without thinking of its result, can you expect a wise man to act without thinking of it? It is impossible, unnatural, artificial and against human nature, *prakriti*. *Without having an idea of the result, no action can be undertaken and when the result comes, it cannot be thrown away.* Why? Because every action will have its reaction and result. Even if you do not want the result, it will necessarily come. Any action will have to bear fruit. This is the law of nature. So we see that the above interpretation is meaningless.

To understand the correct import of this stanza, you will have to connect it with the previous one—*yavanartha udapane*. Krishna has said that for a God-realised soul, a man of *Brahmanubhuti* even heavenly enjoyments are totally insignificant compared to the joy of the inner *anubhuti*, the *ananda* of *Brahmajnana*.

When Krishna extolled the state of *Brahmajnana* so much, Arjuna thought that, that was the right time and opportunity for him to put forth his case. He thought: “Compared to *Brahmajnana*, if attaining anything else is nothing, why should I fight for this paltry kingdom? Should I not sit and meditate and be a *jnani*?” Earlier Arjuna had said: “If I stand unarmed, throwing away my bow and arrows, not fighting, the Kauravas will surely kill me. That will be better for me.” So Arjuna was all for either running away from the battlefield or to allow himself to be killed. This was not real *vairagya*. There are two kinds of temporary *vairagyas*, *smasana vairagya* and *purana vairagya*. A man reads the *puranas*, thinks he has realised the futility of worldly life and has a sort of *vairagya*. The other type is the *vairagya* developed on seeing a dead body burning during cremation or seeing some physical suffering. Immediately, there is a shock, a reaction. You start thinking that the world is useless and transient. This *vairagya* remains only for a short while, till the shock created subsides. Real *vairagya* cannot be had as long as the *raga* and *dwesha* that attach us to the world are still with us intact. Unless *raga* and *dwesha* are completely annihilated, we cannot have true detachment from the external world. This apparent detachment is only a *dwesha buddhi*, “a feeling of dislike or disgust, coming in the garb of dispassion.

When you see a dead body burning, you are reminded that your own body will burn like that one day. Due to the attachment you have for your body, you have a disgust at the very idea of its burning. It depressed you. It is thus a disgust, and not dispassion, that is behind your *vairagya*.

Krishna realises the true nature of Arjuna's *vairagya* and hence gives out this *sloka*. The opening words are: "Your competency is for *karma nishta* alone and not for *jnana nishta*—*karmanyevadhikaraste, na tu jnana nishtayam*. Why?

"O Arjuna, only those who are free from *raga* and *dvesha*, attraction to and repulsion from the world, can have true *vairagya* and can retreat to the forest to meditate. Are you free from *raga* and *dvesha*? I know you properly. All your actions so far have been motivated by *raga* and *dvesha*. You did intense *tapas* for thirty years to get the *Paasupataastra* (a deadly weapon) from Siva. Even that *tapas* was undertaken with *raga*, desire to get the weapon. You have spent these last thirteen years thinking of nothing but how to avenge your cousins and get back the lost kingdom. This is again *raga* and *dvesha*. You then entered the war determined to kill all the Kauravas, because of *raga*, for getting the kingdom, and *dvesha* for the cousins. You thought by getting the kingdom you will get peace and *sukha*. Every action of yours has been propelled, motivated, by *raga* and *dvesha* all these years. But having come here, now you realise that to win the war you have to kill Bhishma and Drona. An obstruction has been created to the easy fulfilment of your desire. This reaction is presenting itself in the form of *vairagya*. Even now you want the kingdom, but you

find you cannot get it without killing Bhishma and Drona. You have in you a *dwesha* in doing something which you think will give *dukkha*. This is not true *vairagya*. A man who has had so much *raga* and *dwesha* all these years as you, cannot in a moment overcome them. Your duty now is to overcome this *raga* and *dwesha*, right in the field where they have arisen. Where exactly is your *raga* and *dwesha* now? It is in fighting this war. Outlive it right in this field. With your present mental attitude you are fit only for *karma yoga* and not for *jnana nishta*. Moreover, a doubt as yours will never have arisen in the mind of a true *vairagi*. He will not consult anybody as to whether he should go to the jungles. He will not ask even his mother: "Will you permit? Will you bless me?" The moment he has the *vairagya* he will just walk off without a second set of clothes. Your very doubt proves that you have not reached that state. *Your competency is only for action and not to relinquish it and go away.* The very *karma* you are doing with *raga* and *dwesha*, do it now without *raga* and *dwesha*. And do not hanker after the result. *Maa phaleshu kadaachana:* Do not be attached to the results of actions. This is the way to get rid of *raga* and *dwesha*. *Maa karmaphalaheturbhuh:* Let not the force propelling your action be the desire for the fruit of action. Do your work properly, but let not the picture of the result stand in front of you constantly. *Maa te sangostu akarmani:* Do not attach yourself to inaction either. Keep yourself active always.

In the 18th Chapter a wonderfully scientific analysis is made about how our actions take place and the way in which the results come.

अविष्टानं तथा कर्ता करणं च पृथग्विधम् ।

विविधाश्च पृथक्चेष्टा दैवं चैवात्र पञ्चमम् ।

शरीरवाङ्मनोभिर्यत्कर्म प्रारभते नरः ।

न्याय्यं वा विपरीतं वा पञ्चैते तस्य हेतवः ॥

*Adhishthaanam tathaa kartaa karanam cha prithagvidham
Vividhaascha prithakcheshtaa daivam chaivaatra panchamam.
Sareeravaangmanobhiryatkarma praarabhate narah,
Nyaayyam vaa vipareetam vaa panchaite tasya hetavah.*

Whoever he be, whatever actions he may perform, there are five factors that govern the attainment of the result of each of his actions. The action may be physical, mental or verbal. The five factors are: (1) *adhishthanam*, ground or background; (2) *karta*, the doer; (3) *karanam*, the instruments used in action; (4) *cheshtha*, the processes of action and (5) *daivam*, the invisible factor which has a power over all our actions and over which we have no control. Let us take an example, say, growing vegetables in a garden. First, the ground or field is necessary. Secondly, a man who knows how to prepare the ground and how to grow the vegetables. Thirdly, seed, water and different instruments to prepare the soil are necessary. Fourthly, the working process. Unless you know the correct method of growing vegetables, all the above factors will not be of any use. Even if all the above four factors are to our utmost satisfaction, there is yet another factor that governs the result. It is the invisible factor beyond our control. You have done your part properly. The vegetables have grown well and before you pluck them, a cyclone comes and uproots everything. So, even if you

perform your part well, yet the result may or may not come. The possibility of our not getting the desired result may be small in some cases and big in others. But it is always there. So what should be our attitude to our actions and the results desired? We should perform our part, the first four factors, well and properly. We should allow always for the fifth factor operating. Whether the desired result comes or not, we should be equanimous and poised.

Here is the difference between a *karmi* and a *karma yogi*. Take the example of bringing up the children.

The *karmi* will have all sorts of desires about his son. He must become an engineer, for, engineers are very much in demand now; he must get a very highly paid job, he must marry a rich girl and so on. Thus he goes on imagining and gets attached, glued to the result he expects and desires. When there is this excessive desire and attachment in our heart, there is always a negative force operating within ourselves. When one prays, "O God! make my son pass his examination", the prayer arises only because there is a strong negative feeling within him that the son will *not pass*. So our mind is tossed between these conflicting forces. Such a mind is full of confusion, fears, upsets and disturbances. The actions of a man with such a mind are confused. He disciplines his children artificially to suit his dreams about them. The son may be weak in mathematics, yet the father somehow or other gets him admitted in an engineering college. The very first year the son fails. The father complains: "O God! have you no eyes, are you blind?" He consults astrologers about the son's horoscope, and according to their instructions, propitiates *Sani* or *Sukra* who happens to be in the wrong place. Again he sends the son to the engi-

neering college and the son again fails. The father is again upset and puts his son into the law college, with no better results. All these twenty years or so, the father did not have any peace of mind, imagining all sorts of things for his son and now he is miserable that his plans did not materialise. Not only that, he has spoiled his son's future too.

Supposing the son did not turn out to be a fool but became an engineer, even then the father is not happy because he did not get a first division. In his imagination he is so irrational and unreasonable that the results are never upto his expectations. His life is a series of recoils, bumps and upsets.

How will a *karma yogi* act under similar circumstances? His attitude will be: "I have got control over only four of the five factors. I will do my part as best as I can. If the results are to come, they will certainly come, whether I worry about them or not. If they do not come, then also I do not care. I will not let the result affect my *samabhava*. I will outlive both pleasure at getting success and pain at not getting it, by my *samabhava*."

So, being unattached and knowing the technique of *karma yoga*, he performs his part perfectly, dexterously. Instead of bringing up his son in an artificial way, he will put him forth in a field in which the son has a genuine interest and liking. He will help his son develop according to his own nature and inclination. Having a clear insight, his action almost never misfires. Even supposing it does, he is not worried or upset, for he is not attached to the result. He thinks: "I have done my job well. If the result has not come, it is not my fault and it

is beyond my control. What is the use of my being upset about it?"

A *karma yogi* also has an idea of the result, but he does not cling to it. *Thinking of the result is one thing and being attached to the result is another.* Attachment is the thing to be left.

A *karma yogi*, therefore, is not attached to the fruit of his actions, is not motivated to do his actions by the picture of the fruit before him and is never inactive. He does not idle away his time.

The term *karma* in *maa te sangostvakarmani* means any action we undertake. It does not mean *vaidika karma*, rituals, as most of the interpreters, excepting Sankara, have interpreted.

Karma according to the Gita is not rituals. Any change, movement, *chalana* of the body, mind or *indriyas* is *karma*. Breathing, eating, excreting are all actions. We cannot live even for a short time with complete inactivity.

Krishna goes on to say:

योगस्थः कुरु कर्माणि सङ्गं त्यक्त्वा धनंजय ।

सिद्धयसिद्धयोः समो भूत्वा समत्वं योग उच्यते ॥

*Yogasthah kuru karmaani sangam tyaktvaa Dhananjaya,
Siddhyasiddhyoh samo bhootvaa samatvam yoga uchyate.*

O Arjuna! do your actions without attachment. Be equanimous in success or failure. This equanimity is called *yoga*."

It has become a fashion to refer to ministers and other V.I.P.s as "he is a *karma yogi*." In most cases it is

the clerk, the servant, the housewife, the officer, who is a *karma yogi*, who is able to keep his equanimity when *sukha* and *dukkha* try to pinch him. How many so-called *karma yogis* are able to do that?

Sidhyasidhayoh samo bhutwa—Whether the desired result comes or not, either way you must be able to remain completely calm within. To sustain the disappointment of not getting the result with equanimity, is real *paurusha*. Equanimity is the key or secret of *karma yoga*. If you are able to remain absolutely calm in the face of misfortune and maintain your *samabhava* when beset with calamity, then you are a veritable God. In short, cultivating *samabhava* is the first and foremost thing in the Vedantic way of life.

Krishna goes on to say:

दूरेण ह्यवरं कर्म बुद्धियोगाद् धनंजय ।

बुद्धौ शरणं अन्विच्छ कृपणाः फलहेतवः ॥

Doorena hyavaram karma bhuddhiyogaaddhananjaya,
Buddhau saranam anvichchha kripanaah phalahetavah.

When I first read this *sloka*, I was wonderstruck at the wisdom contained in it and even now I am so much overjoyed when I read it. I cannot but admire the grandeur and glory of our *sastras*. Krishna says: “O Dhananjaya, (*dhanam jayati iti Dhananjayah*, meaning that Arjuna had defeated many kings and brought all their wealth,) you were up to now motivated by all sorts of desires. Your *buddhi* was attached to *asa* (desire), you were never contented. Bring about a change in your attitude now. Take refuge in equanimity.” *Bhuddhiyoga* means a *karmi* becoming a *karma yogi*, with an equanimous mind deve-

loped through Vedantic knowledge, Krishna is categorically telling his *bhakta*, that the only way to progress is to cultivate equanimity. Yet, the so-called *bhaktas* never understand this. In South India, we have Muruga *bhaktas* and Ayyappa *bhaktas*, who dance in ecstasy claiming that God had visited them. They are nowhere near God. They are subject to some sort of nervous vibrations. Sankara says: "O God, I must be free from such trances." For Vedantins, these trances are a great hindrance. "O Arjuna, if you continue to work with the idea of getting the fruits of your action, wretched are you!" Krishna, without mincing words, explains *karma yoga*. Consciously and diligently, cultivate *samabhava*. When *sukha* and *dukkha* come, try to outlive them, do not dwell upon them. A mind with *samabhava* is in league with so many good forces of the world. The intellect naturally develops with such a mind. Difficult passages of scriptures reveal their true meaning. Much more than all this is the inner serenity and *ananda* which you get. Therefore take refuge in *samabuddhi* i. e. equanimity.

बुद्धियुक्तो जहातीह उभे सुकृतदुष्कृते ।

तस्माद्योगाय युज्यस्व योगः कर्मसु कौशलम् ॥

Buddhiyukto jahaateeha ubhe sukrita-dushkrite,

Tasmaadyogaaya yujyasva yogah karmasu kausalam.

Karma yoga is not a new *karma*. The *Kausalam* referred to here is Vedantic dexterity, not intellectual crookedness. If you have an equanimous mind, you can cut across *sukha* and *dukkha*. Why do we do good actions? Because we think they will yield good results, which in turn means *sukha*, which is a feeling coming in the mind.

Similarly, why do we avoid bad deeds? Because they will yield bad results, give us *dukkha*, which again is a feeling in the mind. If we outlive *sukha* and *dukkha* right now, why be afraid of the outcome of good or bad actions? If by doing bad deeds, you can have a wonderful life, all of us will do so. We do not do it because, if we start cutting others' throats, we are afraid they will cut our throats. Somebody asked me if, after developing an equanimous mind, one coolly starts cutting others' throats, will there be *paapa* (sin)? My reply was that, if that person is caught and taken to the gallows and there also, facing his death, he exhibits the same equanimity, no *papa* will accrue to him.

A *karma yogi* can never do *papa*. *Papa* is motivated by selfishness. When selfishness is not there, how will *papa* come. The various do's and don'ts are only for selfish people, who do not understand what true religion is. Vedanta alone says: "Read me, assimilate me and then throw me away." Other religious books say: "Hug on to me, do not leave me and keep a copy even in your death bed!"

Karma yoga is a dexterous process; there is no pinching effect while doing *karma yoga*. For example, why do you all go to offices, and plod through seven hours' work which does not interest you in the least? "Because" you will argue, "If I do not go, I will lose my job and if I lose it, I cannot support my family." Don't you have a pinching effect here? Yes. Take away this pinching effect and do the work. That work becomes *karma yoga*, automatically.

कर्मजं बुद्धियुक्ता हि फलं त्यक्त्वा मनीषिणः
जन्मबन्धविनिर्मुक्ताः पदं गच्छन्त्यनामयम् ॥

*Karmajam buddhiyuktaa hi phalam tyaktvaa maneeshinah,
Janmabandhavinirmuktaah padam gachchhant yanaamayam.*

Manishinah means wise men who have left off all attachments, having renounced the fruit of actions and freed themselves from the fetters of birth and death. This worldly life is *bandha* (bondage). Krishna uses the term *vinirmuktaah*. *Muktaah* means freed, *nirmuktaah* means absolutely freed, and *vinirmuktaah* means wonderfully, easily and absolutely freed. That *Mukti* which you get is always permanent, and comes to you even while you are alive. The world is a pond, in which, if you know swimming, you can have a refreshing bath and attain *ananda*. If you do not know swimming, you will be drowned; misery would be your lot.

Arjuna asks: "How long am I to do *karma yoga* for attaining *Mukti*." Krishna says:

यदा ते मोहकलिलं बुद्धिर्व्यतितरिष्यति ।
तदा गन्तासि निर्वेदं श्रोतव्यस्य श्रुतस्य च ॥
श्रुतिविप्रतिपन्ना ते यदा स्थास्यति निश्चला ।
समाधावचला बुद्धिस्तदा योगमवाप्स्यसि ॥

*Yadaa te mohakalilam buddhirvyatitarishyati,
Tadaa gantaasi nirvedam srotavyasya srutasya cha.
Srutivipratipannaa te yadaa sthaasyati nischalaa,
Samaadhaavachalaa buddhistadaa yogamavapsyasi.*

We think that life means amassing wealth. Every day we get up and do certain things mechanically. All

our tendencies are extrovert in nature. *Mohakalilam* means that force which clouds the discriminative faculty which knows what is real and unreal and what is permanent and impermanent and leads the mind towards the *vishayas*—in short the basic *avidya*. By cultivation of *samabhava*, we can outlive the extrovert tendencies in us and at that time we will become indifferent to all *sastras*. Let me repeat, we will become totally indifferent to all the do's and don't's of the *sastras*. We will transcend what we have heard hitherto as well as what we have yet to hear about the religion and the do's and don'ts normally in vogue. You will have no necessity for them, for what you are aiming at unconsciously and what you are getting during some fleeting moments and in a very limited form while doing your religious practices, are small samples of the Vedantic *samabhava*. You did not know this fact hitherto, because that experience came to you unconsciously and in an indirect way. Now you know the secret. Cultivate *samabhava* directly, with control over it. Then, what use is there of ignorant and indirect religious practices and dreary rituals, which are mostly modes of begging, praying and flattering?

Free yourself from such religious limitations, and cultivating *samabhava*, attain a standard of perfection in it. Then a special awakening will dawn in you, rather unexpectedly. In other words, that thoughtless awareness will suddenly dawn one day and the mind will go back to its source. Then you will be in *nirvikalpa samadhi*. Till then you have to go on practising *karma yoga*. There is no period prescribed for it. Each will attain this according to the intensity of his *sadhana* and his spiritual development.

Chapter 8

THE STHITAPRAJNA

Arjuna's next question is:

स्थितप्रज्ञस्य का भाषा समाधिस्थस्य केशव ।

स्थितधीः किं प्रभाषेत किमासीत ब्रजेत किम् ॥

*Sthitaprajnasya kaa bhaashaa samadhisthasya Kesava,
Sthitadheeh kim prabhaasheta kimaaseeta vrajeta kim.*

“What are the signs and symptoms, definition or description of a *sthitaprajna*, of a man absorbed in *nirvikalpa samadhi*?” What *bhava* or state of mind will he have, who has transcended his very mind? The literal translation of this verse will not give you much meaning, as a man in *nirvikalpa samadhi* transcends all signs and symptoms and defies all descriptions. When a man has transcended all vibrations, let it be the movement of the body, *indriyas* or mind, how can he have a *lakshana*, sign or symptom. Signs and symptoms can be there only when there is a movement or vibration.

An *avadhuta sannyasin* merged in *sat-chit-ananda* (*samadhi*) was lying under a bridge one night. A thief who passed that way, saw the naked man and observed: “You must have been caught while stealing and given a good beating. Serves you right for not perfecting your techniques.” After some time a drunkard came that way and

remarked: "So you also drank without permit. You should know at least when to stop the sipping." Another fellow who habitually stayed away at nights from his house, seeing the *sadhu*, said: "Wonderful! you must have tried your tricks with some woman who has given you a nice punishment." A *sannyasin* came that way for his morning bath and seeing the naked *sadhu* remarked: "A *mahatma* is lying here. Blessed is the world for producing such great souls."

Each, according to his *manobhava*, mental attitude, made comments. There is thus no sign or symptom in a *sthitaprajna* when he is in his sūpreme silence.

There can be two interpretations to the above *sloka*. One is: "Will a *sthitaprajna* talk, sit and walk?" It is obvious that a *sthitaprajna*, after coming down to the mental level, will have to talk with his mouth, breathe through his nose, and work with his *karmendriyas*. He does not develop any new faculty of talking through his nose and walking with his hands. He has to act with the *indriyas* in the same way as before, but the real change is in his outlook. After realising that the One Infinite Principle experienced by him in *samadhi* is everywhere, he has no more *raga*, *dwesha* and fear. He has, instead, spontaneous love for all. Other religions say that we are the sons of the same father and hence should love each other. Even in the ideal of brotherhood there is a strong element of duality. You are to love another because of the common link, namely the father. Still we are daily witnessing brothers fighting brothers for their father's property. There are several families, where brothers do not even speak with one another. There is no love lost.

The brotherhood ideal falls far short of the Vedantic ideal. Here it is all one—no father or brother relationship. It is a direct love, because the others are your very being. This love is identical with the love one has for oneself. If a mosquito bites your left hand, the right hand drives it away and scratches the spot, not because of its love for the left hand, but on account of the oneness-feeling. It is spontaneous. No love comes here. This act transcends love.

When we realise that we are the One Unified Consciousness, *satchidananda*, with whom can we quarrel, with whom can we fight, whom can we be attracted to and whom can we be repulsed from? What are we to be attached to? What are we to be afraid of? What are we to be repulsed from? Everything is looked upon as a part and parcel of our very being, the true being. Can the right hand quarrel with the left hand? This may be possible, but even that much of rift is not there in the Vedantic realisation.

Someone asked me whether it would not be rank selfishness to aspire for this state of *ananda*, when our family is suffering and when the rest of the world is also suffering. Let us analyse the nature of selfishness. Say, you are working in an office and there is a talk of promotion. You immediately go to your superiors and represent that you are the fittest person, that you are working overtime, that you are having a big family to support and so on. This is a positive projection of selfishness. There is a negative one also. You represent that the other man, who is strongly tipped for the promotion is not deserving, that he has joined the union, that he is regularly irregular, that he is committing a lot of blunders, etc. In short, what you

are trying to get for your own happiness, you do not want others to get. Selfishness stems from the body and mind *abhimana*. You want the body to have comforts and the mind to have joy. Selfishness rises because of a feeling of duality that I am separate and the rest of the world is separate from me. To attain the supreme *ananda* of self-realisation, the very force of selfishness which binds us, rivets us to the body and mind *abhimana*, has to be transcended and outlived. Truly speaking, *Brahma jnana* is the only thing that can root out our selfishness completely. Can there be selfishness when we look upon others as our very being? The outstanding-feature of *Brahma jnana* is transcendental love. Love is the very nature of it. What can express the love that is born in us when we realise the One Unified Consciousness, the One Infinite Reality, transcending, permeating and pervading in and through everything.

That *Brahma jnana* which is attained only after killing selfishness, cannot be called selfishness. It is the very negation of selfishness. Only we mistake it for selfishness. There is no petty love here; on the contrary, there is one unified feeling, higher than love, transcendental and supreme.

The correct interpretation of Arjuna's question is: How do others define a *sthitaprajna*? What will be the spirit or propelling force behind the thoughts, words and actions of a *sthitadhi*? If after coming to the conscious level from the superconscious state, he continues to have the same old *raga*, *dvesha* and *bhaya*, what is the use of his *samadhi*, *sthitaprajnata*?

If he is going to do the same sort of actions (with *raga-dvesha*, like a *karmi*) as any ordinary man, then there

is no use of such *jnana*. If he acts, what will be the force propelling him? When he sits quietly, without acting, what will be the thoughts occupying his mind? (When we have no work, our mind will think either of the past actions, dead and gone, or do *samkalpa* of the projected plans for the future, yet to be born.) Will a *sthitadhi* also keep thinking of his past actions and dreaming about the future?

Krishna says: "No, he will not." A spiritual man has so many compartments, so to say, within himself. He does his work in each field perfectly, but once that is over, never thinks of it again during other moments. He has separate compartments for office, home and society and keeps one for spiritual *sadhana*. He never mixes them up and does not make them overlap.

Many people working in Government offices, after returning home, talk nothing but office matters. "My officer told me this, my officer told me that. I did this, I did that. He did not like it. I spoke to him like this. He was not satisfied", etc. You go to Delhi and everywhere you hear nothing but this, right from the lowest clerk to the highest official. They have imprisoned themselves in a world of their creation. They think that the Government of India is sitting on their heads. Similarly, other people in banks and in business talk only of their business. A hotelier, when he comes back home, or talks among his friends, complains that the price of dal has gone up, that the number of customers coming to his hotel is getting reduced because of high taxation, etc.

If a man who has attained *samadhi* (why did he, first of all, want to attain *samadhi*?—because he found that all

external objects could not give him happiness, he wanted to go to that transcendental joy by getting rid of *raga* and *dvesha*) is still going to talk of the same old thing, hotel business, office business, market business, etc., then is there any use of this *samadhi*? A *sthitadhi*, once he leaves the office and comes home, does not keep on thinking of the office. In the office he does not think of his home and children and worry about them. Thus he is able to work efficiently. During his leisure time, when he has no work, his mind is wholly given to the thoughts of the Supreme Reality and he merges himself in the consciousness of the all pervading *Parabrahman*. His mind is always calm. He knows that the world is the dynamic expression of the Infinite Reality. Dynamism means the capacity to express or reveal. Just as the ocean's dynamism is to express itself in the form of waves and bubbles, so also the infinite *Brahman* has the capacity to express itself as this illimitable universe. He realises that until yesterday he thought this emanation, i. e., the visible universe, was the sole reality, but now he understands that Reality from which this universe has emanated: Just as the illumining capacity and the heating capacity of fire are not different from the fire itself, so also this visible universe is not separate from the Infinite *Brahman*. It is the nature of the very *Brahman* itself. The very "I" is an expression of the Infinite. "I am not a separate, disconnected, disunited entity. I am an expression of the Infinite, all-pervading *Brahman*."

Rooted in this consciousness, whatever he does turns out to be for the welfare of the world as well as for his own *Moksha*—(*atmano mokshartham jagat hitaya cha.*) He does not occupy himself in idle talk. He talks only what

he has known from deep within. His actions are consistent with his realisation. With utmost universal love and sympathy he points out to others the way to attain the Reality. Even a mother's love for her children is inferior to the love a *Brahma-jnani* has for all beings. His very nature is love. He becomes divinised and is an instrument for the divine expression of *Brahman*. He so bubbles and overflows with *ananda* that he influences those who come to him and who are near him. He will try to convey in words the wonderful experience he had and has, and show the path to attain the Reality to all the people around him. Just as a mother with her unbounded love for her children, distributes all good things to them, keeping nothing for herself, the *sthitadhi* will radiate *ananda* and joy around him. A businessman who has realised this state will become honest, will not resort to his old black-market methods. A hotelier will prepare wholesome things and not adulterate the food. He will try to do real service to others. An office-going man will be sincere in his work and give out his best. In short, we become mediums for the divine expression. Henry Ford was nearly such a man. It is said that he used to have *samadhi* in his car. The Ford Foundation Trust has given by way of charity millions and millions of dollars and helped so many countries. The Divine Will will be expressed through a *sthitadhi* in a way consistent with the requirement of his surroundings.

Even amongst *Brahmajnanis*, different people have different dispositions and express themselves in different ways, depending on the residue of their *karma* that is to be exhausted. Some may become *sannyasins*, some work like Mahatma Gandhi and Vinoba Bhave for the up-

lift and benefit of mankind. Some may try to convey to others around them an idea of what that Reality is and show them the way to realise it. Some keep quiet as *maunis*. Some people mistakenly think that the *jnana* the *maunis* have is wasted, when it is not put to some concrete use for the welfare of the world. Their *jnana* is not wasted because, as they sit and meditate (may be in some remote place far removed from the bustle of the world), the good thought-forces generated by their meditation work more wonder than if they had expressed their *jnana* and *ananda* outwardly. It is only the totality of the thought-force emanating from such souls that supports and sustains anyone trying to spread the knowledge of *Brahman* in this world. So these great souls unassumingly do good to the world, in an imperceptible way, often.

One may now ask whether a *sthitadhi* will not be affected by pain or sorrow, as he is in the relative mental level. No doubt, if there is an intense physical pain he will certainly experience it. Though outwardly he may be crying in agony, yet inwardly he laughs. How does a *sthitadhi* deal with the world, and his family? If his child is mischievous, he may scold him, or even beat him, but although he appears angry, his mind is full of serenity and joy. You may ask how this is possible. Suppose, in a drama two people, Krishna and Narayan, are playing the parts of Rama and Vali. They would be fighting with as much realism as is possible for them. People who are witnessing the fight will mistake it for a real fight. Krishna is impregnated with the feeling that he is Rama, and Narayan is impregnated with the feeling that he is Vali. Although they forget themselves, still a portion of their consciousness is constantly awake and alive to their

real personalities. There is a beautiful *sloka* about the way a *sthitadhi* behaves in the world.

पुंखानुपुंखविषयेक्षणतत्परोपि ब्रह्मावलोकनधियं न जहाति योगी ।
संगीतताललयवाद्यवशंगतापि मौलिस्थकुम्भपरिरक्षणधीर्नटीव ॥

Punkhaanupunkhavishayekshanatat paropi

Brahmaavalokanadhiyam na jahaati yogee

Sangeetataalalayavaadyavasangataapi

Maulisthakumbhaparirakshanadheernateeva.

If an expert archer shoots arrows in quick succession, the end portions of which are attached with feathers, to an onlooker it gives the impression as though the feathers are flying in a procession. In a wheel rotating at high speed, the spokes are not seen. Similarly, in a *sthitadhi*, his mind may go to the *vishayas*, but in spite of that he does not leave the consciousness that he is one with *Brahman*. A dancer is dancing to the tune of wonderful and attractive music and other musical instruments, *laya vadya*. On her head, she has a pot of milk. Although she is dancing and all her *indriyas* and mind are attracted by the music and absorbed in dancing, still one part of her consciousness is alive and awake to see that the pot of milk does not fall down.

Similarly, for a *sthitadhi*, even when his mind goes out to the *vishayas* of the world, the main part of it is fully aware of his real personality, it remains rooted to the soul-centre. He is always in the *Brahmic* awareness. Vedanta calls this *visvatmabhava*.

Samadhi alone will lead to this *visvatmabhava*—pure homogeneous understanding that all is *Brahman*. *Samadhi*

alone is capable of leading us to the universal consciousness which is all-pervading.

प्रजहाति यदा कामान् सर्वान् पार्थ मनोगतान् ।

आत्मन्येवात्मना तुष्टः स्थितप्रज्ञस्तदोच्यते ॥

*Prajahaati yadaa kaamaan sarvaan Paartha manogathan,
Atmanyevaatmanaa tushtah sthitaprajnastadochyate.*

Kaman here means *vishayas*. When a man with full freedom and will-power throws away the *vishaya* thoughts that come and afflict him, when he starts finding *ananda* in the *Atman*, through the *Atman*, without any second object, leaving the *triputi* (subject, predicate, object realm; the seer, seen, seeing realm), then he is said to be a *sthitaprajna*. This is the state where, by subtle contemplation, one merges in *turiya*.

When we go to sleep, there is a natural cessation of thoughts. There is a clouding up which is a negative property of consciousness. Yet when we wake up, we are able to remember the life before we slept. Behind the clouding, there is the "I" awareness, which could not express itself. After a sound sleep, we get up and say: "I had a very good sleep." We say so because we remember that experience. Sleep was a past event. When we are realising a past event, we do so remembering the event. We must have, therefore, observed it when the event took place, as otherwise we would not remember it. Thus even when we were sleeping, somebody within us was watching and that is why when we wake up, we say that we had a good sleep or a disturbed sleep as the case may be. Vidyaranya gives this wonderful argument in his *Panchadasi*. This is the summit of logic. Now, *samadhi* is that when,

by conscious contemplation, the thoughts get stopped completely. You should not and do not fall into sleep in the process; then leaving the realm of the thoughts as well as deep sleep, the mind recedes back and merges in the Witness 'I'. Don't think that 'I' to be a small thing. It is infinite. The whole universe is only a small speck there.

The people who are capable of proper imagination, who know how to enjoy the beauty of things, let them wake up and taste this. After the stopping of the thoughts you will be seated in the ultimate, non-dual, *Satchidananda*

दुःखेष्वनुद्विग्नमनाः सुखेषु विगतस्पृहः ।

वीतरागभयक्रोधः स्थितधीर्मुनिरुच्यते ॥

*Dukkhashvanudvignamanaah sukhesu vigatasprihah,
Veetaragabhayakrodhah sthitadheermuniruchyate.*

When, from the *sthitaprajna* state, we come to the ordinary level, when *dukkha* comes and assaults us, we will have no more *udvega* (movement created within), no more pinch or prick. An *ajnani* has *spriha* (subtle desire) which is the younger brother of *asa*. You may be free of *asa*, but not from *spriha*. Even *satvik* people have this. A man may not be wearing a watch and he may not be keenly desiring one. A friend comes and tells him: "Whether you wear a watch or not, it does not matter to you. Then why not wear it?" The man succumbs to this argument as there is a little *spriha* in him.

For a *jnani*, even this *spriha* is not there. The three forces that work behind the actions of an *ajnani* are *raga*, *dwesha* and *bhaya* (fear). They arise due to dualistic un-

derstanding. When we leave the realm of duality and multiplicity, when we transcend the feeling “I am separate and you are separate” and realise the one reality which is everywhere, to whom can we be attracted, from whom can we be repulsed, and whom are we to fear?

Many dolls are there made of clay. When we understand that all are only clay, all the attachments we had towards the dolls would go away. Similarly, when we enter *samadhi*, and realise the One Principle, the previous attractions and repulsions would have no more place. Krishna continues to tell Arjuna the signs by which a *sthitadhi* can be distinguished: -

या निशा सर्वभूतानां तस्यां जागर्ति संयमी ।

यस्यां जाग्रति भूतानि सा निशा पश्यतो मुनेः ॥

Yaa nisa sarvabhootanaam tasyaam jaagarti samyamee,

Yasyaam jaagrati bhootani saa nisa pasyato muneh.

A *samyami* is one who has controlled his *indriyas*. Controlling of sense organs is essential if one is to progress spiritually. Unless they are controlled, they constantly go out towards *vishayas* and they will drag the mind with them. Such an extrovert cannot have *ananda*, for *ananda* does not dwell in the objects of the external world. One who knows Vedanta *tatva* and is convinced that the realisation of the one Infinite Reality alone can give him abiding joy and who wants to change his life to the path of *sadhana* (spiritual practice) has to regulate the outward propensities of his senses. Then the mind will not go out any more, will turn inward and start contemplating on the Supreme. This contemplation will lead him little by little and take him to the *sthitaprajna* state

and then gradually to *visvatma bhava* (cosmic consciousness). So the first step for a *sadhaka* is to regulate the outward tendencies of the senses and the mind. Side by side he must cultivate *samabhava*. When he starts outliving *sukha* and *dukkha*, the *raga* and *dwesha* which issue forth and bring him *sukha* and *dukkha* will also slowly subside. He will be moving in the world, but the mind will not be dragged by the objects of the external world.

A *samyami* is not forced by the physical surroundings to control his senses. A prisoner has to control his sense organs because he has no outlet for them, but he is not a *samyami*. A *samyami* does not also control his sense organs because of the fear that if he indulges, he may suffer some reactions, that is, he does not control his *indriyas* to avert some unpleasant consequences. He controls them because his ideal is *Mukti*. He is convinced that he cannot have lasting joy from the world. What is worldly life? It is the *indriya* life with the consequent *sukha* and *dukkha*. So he must control his *indriyas* and outlive *sukha* and *dukkha*. This is his attitude. He accepts it as the means which will help him have the highest awakening, attainment.

There is a *sloka* in *Yogavasishtha*, where Sri Rama says to Vasishta:

तरन्ति मातंगघटातरंगं रणांबुधिं ये मयि ते न शूराः ।
शूरास्त एवेह मनस्तरंगं देहेन्द्रियांबोधिं इमं तरन्ति ॥

Taranti maatanga-ghataatarangam

ranaambudhim ye mayi te na sooraah,

Soorasta eveha manastarangam

dehendriyaambodhim imam taranti.

“O Maharshi, I will not call him a hero, *soora* who stands alone and resists single handedly wave after wave of mounted soldiers and infantrymen in a battlefield (which is so vast that it resembles an ocean) and defeats the enemies. According to me, he alone is a hero who has courage enough to cross over the ocean of the body *sarira samudra* with its five organs of sense *panchendriya*, and the five organs of action *karmendriya*. In this ocean the waves are the desires, *asa*. That man who is capable of crossing this ocean, with its waves of desires and thoughts, alone is a real hero, *soora*.

How is one to control one's *indriyas* If you perforce try to control them, they will in turn try to control you. Repression of *indriyas* by force will only lead to frustration and fall. Fighting with the senses and the mind is not profitable. Take recourse to something higher than the mind, viz *buddhi*, *viveka*. Reinforce the *buddhi*, and *viveka* with knowledge of *Brahman*. The *buddhi*, when joined with the mind, which in turn is controlled by the sense organs, is terribly weakened. Such a man lives only for the pleasures of the world and the senses. His fate is repeated births and deaths. But when the *buddhi* is attached to the *Atman*, it is greatly strengthened. With that strength it can control the mind which in turn can control the *indriyas*. That *samyami* will attain great joy, *ananda*.

The literal meaning of the *sloka* is: “What is night for all the beings of the world is the time when a *samyami* keeps awake, that is the time he takes as night.”

Here we ought not to go by the word-meaning, but by the essence behind the allegory. Not knowing this, there are many *hatha yogis* who sleep during the day and

keep awake during the night thinking that by so doing they will attain realisation! There is also another *sloka* in Bhagawad Gita which the ignorant interpret literally and suffer. It is:

यथा दीपो निवातस्थो नेङ्गते सोपमा स्मृता ।

योगिनो यतचित्तस्य युञ्जतो योगमात्मनः ॥

*Yathaa deepo nivaatastho nengate sopamaa smritaa,
Yogino yatachittasya yunjato yogamaatmanah.*

“The mind of a *yogi* is like a flame that does not flicker.” It indicates the nature of the mind which should be steady, non-moving, non-flickering. But *hatha yogis* and other ignorant people without understanding this, sit looking at a lamp that is steady and meditate.

The correct purport of the *sloka* is:

The night and day are allegorical references to the two different attitudes of a *jnani* and a worldly man. To a worldly man the wonderful state of *Jivanmukti* and the path leading to it are unknown, that is, *Moksha* is darkness to him. He knows nothing about it. Anything pertaining to *Moksha* and *jnana* is night for him.

But a *jnani* keeps awake in the *jnana* realm. That alone is real for him. He has realised that so long as he remains in the world of multiplicity he cannot have true *ananda*. He has awakened to the joys of the *sthitadhi* state. Not knowing what great *ananda* he can have in that transcendental state, the worldly man, *prapanchika*, may consider the *jnani* a fool. So that realm of *jnana* and *ananda*, where he is wide awake enjoying real bliss, is as night to the ordinary man. What is day to the *jnani* is night to the *ajnani*.

To an *ajnani* this world, with its fleeting joys and sorrows, alone is real. The worldly life is all in all for him. His wife, his children, his job, his money, etc. are the only things that are real to him. He is awake only in the realm of the material life and world, whereas, a *jnani*, reaching the *sthitadhi* state, looks back at the material world and finds it dark. He cannot see what pleasure there is in the worldly life, for, compared to the *ananda* he is having, anything that the world can offer him is insignificant, *tuchcha*. To him the material world is darkness compared to the light of *ananda* he is immersed in. What is day to the ordinary man of the world is darkness to a *jnani*.

See, what a beautiful comparison: the difference between the mental states of a *karmi* and a *sthitadhi*! A *karmi* has many wavering thoughts, represented by a wavy line. By cultivation of *samabhava*, the wavering thoughts are reduced slowly, represented by a straight line. Now, after getting a measure of *samabhava*, he starts meditation. If *samabhava* is not there, the mind will start wandering. So *samabhava* must be cultivated.

First day, if he meditates for thirty minutes, for twentyfive minutes the mind will be wandering and hardly for five minutes he will be able to keep the mind still. But by regular practice, the mind can be slowly controlled and soon a stage will come, when thinking itself will stop and the mind merges itself with the Infinite Consciousness. When he comes back again to the mental level, he will find that he has been endowed with serenity and *ananda*. If sincerely practised, it is possible to reach this state within one year, or at the most within three years. Do not think *nirvikalpa samadhi* is difficult. Ra-

mana Maharshi has said: "How easy it is!" The mind will get purged of all evils. All *raga* and *dwesha* would go away totally. The change is purely internal. Do not think that after *nirvikalpa samadhi* your skin will become beautiful. Strangely enough people are afraid of reaching this state. A beautiful simile is given in the following slokas:

आदौ वधू भर्तृगृहं स्वगेहात् गन्तुं यथा रोदिति नीयमाना ।

ततः शनैः भर्तृसुखावबोधात् नैवेहते मातृगृहं प्रयातुम् ॥

दारापत्यगृहप्रपञ्चविषयादादौ जगन्नायकं

गन्तुं बुद्धिरियं बिभेति किल तत्संगानभिज्ञास्वयं

ज्ञाते तद्रसवैभवे खलु शनैः सैवेश्वरोपासनात् ।

आगन्तुं विषयान् पुनर्बहुविधं क्लेशं समारंभते ॥

Aadau vadhoo bhartrigriham svagehaat

gantum yatha roditi neeyamaanaa,

Tatah sanaih bhartrisukhaavabodhat

naivehate maatrigriham prayaatum.

Daaraapatyagrihaprapanchavishayaadaadau jagannaayakam,

Gantum buddhiriyam bibheti kila tatsangaanabhijnaasvayam,

Jnaate tadrasavaibhave khalu sanaih saivesvaropaasanaat,

Aagantum vishayaan punarbahuvidham klesam samaarambhate.

A newly married girl going to her husband's place for the first time is described here. The girl starts crying as she leaves a familiar place to an unknown place. She does not know how her mother-in-law and husband will treat her. After going to her husband's place and remaining with him for some time, the girl feels: "This is my

real life, this is my real home.” If her mother sends her a letter, asking her to go home for a few days, she gives the excuse that her husband does not permit her. She does not like to part with her husband. Even if she eventually visits her mother’s place, she forces him to accompany her. Similarly, not knowing how wonderful the *sthitaprajna* state is, we start crying like the newly married girl. Ignorance is the reason. But once we experience the *sthitaprajna* state it will be a hundred times more difficult to come back to the original state. Even if we come back, we come back with *jnana*, as the girl comes with her husband. The mind is afraid of going to the *Jagannayaka*, *Sarveswara* in the initial stages and has to be coaxed and cajoled. Having tasted the grandeur of the glory and the great *ananda* arising from union with the Infinite Consciousness, it can never come back to its former state of ignorance. When it comes back, it is divinised. Our life, all our actions and associations get purified. This is the *sthitadhi* state. *Rishis*, Krishna, Rama and other great souls were in this state. We will remain in the world after that, as long as the momentum of our past actions or *karma* remains. If brakes are applied to a moving vehicle, it stops only after going a certain distance. Similarly, the *sthitadhi* continues in the mundane world till all his *karmas* are exhausted. Then he drops his body and attains *Videhanukti*, merging with the Infinite Consciousness. Anybody and everybody can achieve this. Are you able to understand this? Are your eyes opened?

Chapter 9

KARMA YOGA—II

When Arjuna hears Krishna going on extolling the *sthitadhi* state, he has a genuine doubt. He asks a question in the beginning of the 3rd chapter, which indicates that he had not understood the purport of Krishna's preceding advice. He could not understand the idea Krishna wanted to convey. He asks:

ज्यायसी चेत्कर्मणस्ते मता बुद्धिर्जनार्दन ।
तत्किं कर्मणि घोरे मां नियोजयसि केशव ॥

Jyaayasee chetkarmanaste mataa buddhirjanaardana,
Tatkim karmani ghore maam niyojayasi Kesava.

“O Krishna, if your opinion is that *buddhi* is better than *karma*, then why are you enjoining me to a *karma* that is so terrible?”

Arjuna's doubt is reasonable and intelligent. We will briefly recapitulate what Krishna had said in the second chapter. First Krishna tacitly tells Arjuna to fight.

क्लैव्यं मा स्म गमः पार्थ नैतत्त्वय्युपपद्यते ।
क्षुद्रं हृदयदौर्बल्यं त्यक्तवोत्तिष्ठ परन्तप ॥

Klaibyam maa sma gamah Paartha naitatvayyupapadyate
Kshudram hridayadaurbalyam tyaktwottishtha Parantapa

“O Partha, do not be an imbecile. This does not behove you. Throw away this degrading weakness and get up.”

But, as Arjuna was depressed and could not fight, he asked Krishna: “What am I to do? I am afflicted with the world. Tell me the method by which I can outlive this *dukkha* right now.” Krishna goes on giving him the *samkhya tatva*: “You are not the body or mind. You are the Infinite Soul that never dies and is never born. The moment you realise it, you will have no more *sukha* or *dukkha*, pleasure or pain. People who can perceive the Reality know that the unreal does not ever exist and the Reality never ceases to exist. Anything that has the nature of coming and going is unreal. *Sukha* and *dukkha*, pleasure and pain, are unreal because they come and go. So why do you worry about them? Instead of fixing yourself to the changing world, hold on to the non-changing Reality, the *Atman*. Make the very world, which is giving you so much misery now, your teacher helping you to transcend it.”

After giving Arjuna this *samkhya tatva*, Krishna says in the 39th *sloka*:

एषा तेऽभिहिता सांख्ये बुद्धिर्योगे त्विमां शृणु ।
बुद्ध्या युक्तो यया पार्थ कर्मबन्धं प्रहास्यसि ॥

Eshaa te abhihita saamkhye buddhiryoge tvimaam srinu,
Buddhyaa yukto yayaa Paartha karmabandham prahaasyasi.

“I have hereunto told you the wisdom pertaining to *samkhya* or *jnana yoga*. I am now going to tell you how this *samkhya buddhi* is to be brought to the practical field

and made to permeate your actions, turning your ordinary *karma* into *karma yoga*. If you enjoin yourself to that *buddhi* you can cut across the bondage of *karma* and the *karma* you perform will not bind you.”

Again in the 47th *sloka* Krishna says:

कर्मण्येवाधिकारस्ते मा फलेषु कदाचन ।

मा कर्मफलहेतुर्भूर्मा ते सङ्गोऽस्त्वकर्मणि ॥

Karmanyevaadhikaaraste maa phaleshu kadaachana,
Maa karmaphalaheturbhoooh maa te sangostvakarmani.

“Arjuna, your competency is only for *karma* and not for *jnana nishta*. Do not leave *karma* and run away. Do not hanker after the result of your actions, and let not the desire for the fruit of action be the propelling force behind your actions. Be not also inactive.”

Again in the 49th *sloka* Krishna says:

दूरेण ह्यवरं कर्म बुद्धियोगाद्धनञ्जय ।

बुद्धौ शरणमन्विच्छ कृपणाः फलहेतवः ॥

Doorena hyavaram karma buddhiyogaad Dhanamjaya,
Buddhau saranam anvichcha kripanaah phalahetavah.

“Arjuna, *karma* is much inferior to *buddhi*. So take refuge in *buddhi*. Those who do *karma* with desire for the fruit are wretched.”

Naturally Arjuna is confused. So he asks: “If you think *buddhi* is much superior to *karma*, why are you asking me to do this terrible *karma* of fighting the war?” And further:

व्यामिश्रेणेव वाक्येन बुद्धिं मोहयसीव मे ।
तदेकं तद निश्चित्य येन श्रेयोऽहमाप्नुयाम् ॥

*Vyaamisreneva vaakyena buddhim mohayaseeva me,
Tadekam vada nischitya yena sreyaahamaapnuyam.*

“It seems as though you are confusing me, by seemingly contradictory expressions; your expressions are mixed and involved. So tell me in a determined way the one thing by which I can attain *sreyas*. Conclusively tell me the one thing that I should do.”

When Krishna used the terms *buddhi*, *yoga*, *jnana*, *karma*, etc. he used them in a certain context and meaning and Arjuna had understood them wrongly. He had not understood the correct purport of what Krishna said. After giving the *samkhya tatva*, why did Krishna say: “I am now going to tell how you can make this *tatva* saturate your actions and transform them into *karma yoga*?” Because Krishna knew that Arjuna was not ripe enough for *samkhya yoga*. Who is fit for *samkhya yoga*? A man who, either on hearing Vedantic lectures or reading books on Vedanta, suddenly leaves off home and betakes himself away from the worldly life. He has no clinging or attachment to the world, no duty-consciousness. He has realised that the transient world cannot give him lasting *ananda* and his only aim is *Mukti*. He is rid of *raga* and *dvesha*. As Krishna says in the third chapter:

नैव तस्य कृतेनार्थो नाकृतेनेह कश्चन ।
न चास्य सर्वभूतेषु कश्चिदर्थव्यपाश्रयः ॥

*Naiva tasya kritenaartha naakriteneha kaschana,
Na chaasya sarvabhooteshu kaschidarthavyapaasrayah.*

The *samkhyas* have nothing to be attained by doing work and they have nothing to avoid by abstaining from work. In short, the world has nothing to offer them.

Samkhya yoga is only for such people. But Arjuna has not reached that state. He is full of *raga* and *dwesha*. His very weakness and apparent *vairagya* are born of a feeling of *dwesha* at having to kill Bhishma and Drona. He is not rid of attachment. So Krishna says: "I will tell you how to permeate your actions with *samkhya tatva* and transform the very *karma* you do into *karma yoga*, for your competency now is only for doing action and not for the inaction of the *samkhya yogis*. You are not rid of *raga* and *dwesha*. So reinforcing your *buddhi* with *samkhya tatva*, you should work on in the world without attachment. If you do so, the actions will not bind you. Then he also says:

दूरेण ह्यवरं कर्म बुद्धियोगाद्धनञ्जय ।

बुद्धौ शरणमन्विच्छ कृपणाः फलहेतवः ॥

*Doorena hyavaram karma buddhiyogaad Dhananjaya
Buddhau saranamanvichchha kripanaah phalahetavah.*

"Action done with attachment and desire for fruit is much inferior to action done by enjoining yourself to *samkhya tatva*. The *karma* that is ordinarily done by you with *raga* and *dwesha* is much inferior to the actions that you will do if you make them saturated with the understanding of *samkhya tatva*. When you understand *samkhya tatva* you will cultivate *samabhava*, outlive *sukha* and *dukkha* and rid yourself of *raga* and *dwesha*. When you act thus your actions will become *karma yoga*. If you continue to act with *raga-dwesha*, you will be wretched."

Buddhi yoga means *karma* turned into *karma yoga* with the help of *samkhyā buddhi*, in effect by cultivating *sama buddhi*.

So what Krishna meant and what Arjuna understood by that *sloka* were widely different. Hence Arjuna's confusion.

Understanding Arjuna's confusion, Krishna begins to explain this *tatva* right from the beginning:

लोकेऽस्मिन् द्विविधा निष्ठा पुरा प्रोक्ता मयानघ ।
ज्ञानयोगेन सांख्यानां कर्मयोगेन योगिनां ॥

Lokesmin dvividhaa nishthaa puraa proktaa mayaanagha,
Jnaanayogena saamkhyanaam karmayogena yoginaam.

“In this world, right from the beginning, from antiquity, there has been one *nishtha* (way) known by two different names. The *nishtha* for *samkhyas* is known as *jnana yoga* and that for *karma yogis* as *karma yoga*. *Pura prokta* also means, “I told you previously, in second chapter.” But the first interpretation is more logical, as the world has, from time immemorial, only two types of *nishtha*.

Many people interpret *dwividha nishtha* as two *nishthas*. It is not correct. If it had been two, Krishna would have used the dual number *dwividhe nishthe*. But he has not done so. It ought to be interpreted as *eka eva nishtha tathapi dwividha*, i. e. only one *nishtha* known by two names, apparantly different. These two differ only in degrees and not in essence or content.

The popular concept is that in Bhagawad Gita there are three *yogas* drescribed: *karma yoga*, *bhakti yoga* and

jnana yoga. It is not so. It is only one *yoga* known by different names to suit individual tendencies. Ultimately there is only one *yoga*: "God is there. I am here. God and I must become one". This is all the *yoga*—*becoming one with God, union with God*. Our work converted into a means of attaining God is called *karma yoga*; our love and emotion turned towards attaining God as *bhakti yoga* and our wisdom, intellect, used as a means to reach God as *jnana yoga*. Ultimately *karma yoga, bhakti yoga and jnana yoga* are one and one only. If we take them as separate, then we have to lengthen the list, as there are not only these three but altogether eighteen *yogas* in Bhagwad Gita. In the first chapter there is "the *yoga* of grief, *vishadayoga*". What does it mean? A man is afflicted with sorrow. Say, his child dies. Ordinarily, what do men do? They are grief-stricken for some time. As time passes the grief becomes less and less acute and in course of time, they are their old selves. The shock has not taught them any lesson. On the other hand, there may be another man, who has to face a similar tragedy, but faces it differently. He starts thinking: "What is this? I thought my son will outlive me and that I can have *sukha* from him till my death. I took his living for granted and built my plans around him. Yet he is dead now. What I thought to be permanent has turned out to be transient. If I pin my faith on such transient objects I am doomed to disappointment. I must shift my vision to something higher, something which will not betray me."

By doing such *vichara*, he turns Godward. He has turned his *vishada*, grief, into *vishada yoga* a method to attain God-realisation. So also, anything and everything can be turned into *yoga* e. g. marriage *yoga*, job *yoga*, etc,

Anything and everything can set you thinking and turn you Godward. It depends upon one's spiritual development. When you are sufficiently ripe or mature and sincere, that is the time for somebody to come and direct you, show you the way to *Moksha*. He cannot but come. Be absolutely sure about that.

So according to Krishna there is only one *yoga*, having different names. The *samkhya yogis* approach the Infinite Reality through *jnana yoga* and the *karma yogis* through *karma yoga*. The essence in both is the same, the difference being only in degrees.

The *samkhya yogi* has no attachment and clinging. So he leaves society and starts meditating on the Supreme. The *karmi* is not rid of attachment and *raga* and *dwesha*. So he has to convert his actions into *karmayoga* and cultivate equanimity within himself. He has to outlive *raga-dwesha*. As he cultivates more and more *samabhava*, he becomes happier and happier. The secret of true happiness lies in *samabhava* or absence of *raga-dwesha*. We go to Rishikesh, Badrinath, etc., come back and say: "It was wonderful, I was so happy and peaceful there." What was the real reason? You were in the midst of wonderful expanses of nature. There was not so much of activity and you were practically free from *raga* and *dwesha* as there was not much scope for these twin forces to sprout. It was the equanimity of your mind caused by the limited absence of *raga-dwesha* which gave you happiness. So you were happy in *samabhava* and not in Badrinath. You came back and are once again experiencing *raga* and *dwesha* of every-day life; not having *samabhava* now, you are unhappy. So the happiness lies not

in Badrinath or Kedarnath but in yourself. Our mental attitude governs our lives.

Soldiers go to the front. Their primary duty is to kill and nobody considers them as murderers. Why? Because their attitude is (or must be): "I am just an instrument in the hands of a greater power. I am not engaging in this because of any personal likes or dislikes, *raga* or *dwesha*, but because it is my duty to serve my motherland. Whether I am killed or they are killed, I must be unattached. I have nothing to gain." Let a soldier return from the war-front and kill somebody. He is immediately taken into custody, tried and most probably given capital punishment. What is the difference? Only his attitude. In the war front he was killing dozens of persons but was doing it as a *karma yogi*. Here he kills only one person, yet he does it through *raga-dwesha*, because of personal dislike or hatred.

After hearing all these lectures, each one of you must decide for yourself whether you are a *karma yogi* or a *samkhya yogi*. Most of you would be having the attachment, "My wife, my job, my duty, my family, etc." So you do *karma yoga*. Work on as before but without attachment. You must have the attitude, "I am not the doer, I am not the enjoyer." You can eat, drink, hear, touch, fondle your child, use fragrant soap and powder, but beneath it all there must be detachment. You must be able to feel the same detachment whether you are doing something (or enjoying something) or another person is doing (or enjoying). You must try to be rid of *kartritva bhava* and *bhoktritva bhava* (the notions that you are the doer, you are the enjoyer). "It is my body and mind which are working, not 'I'. 'I' am the unchanging

perceiver within,” must be your attitude. Having this *sakshi bhava* (attitude of a witness), fix your sight on the Infinite Reality seated within yourself and shift your personality from the psycho-physical centre to the spiritual centre. Stand as a witness to all activities, *naiva kinchit karomi iti*, saying: “I am not doing anything. The *indriyas* are doing their jobs. I am unconnected.” This should be your inner attitude.

This *karma yoga* is only *jnana yoga* watered down. You evolve gradually. Think it over and if you are not fit for *samkhyā yoga*, then decide right now that you will be a *karma yogi*. Vedānta requires *paurusha*, courage and determination. Have *paurusha* to attain *Moksha*.

न कर्मणामनारम्भात् नैष्कर्म्यं पुरुषोऽश्नुते ।

न च संन्यसनादेव सिद्धिं समधिगच्छति ॥

*Na karmanaamanaarambhaat naishkarmyam purushosnute,
Na cha sannyasanaadeva siddhim samadhigachchhati.*

Paurusha really means, a human being alive with the Infinite Spirit within. It does not refer only to “Men” excluding women.

“O Arjuna, by refusing to start activity, by refusing to engage in action, human beings do not attain. By mere *sannyasa*, leaving away society and going to jungles, i.e. by external *sannyasa*, a man does not get *siddhi*. By *siddhi* is meant *jnanasiddhi* or *jnana prapti* (attainment of *jnana*) and not popularity or prestige. What is or ought to be the purpose of *sannyasa*? Attainment of *jnana* and *Moksha*.”

What is *naishkarmya*?

Of so many people hearing these lectures, there may, perchance, be one man who will come to the firm decision, "I have nothing to gain from this world." Free from attachment, sense of duty and obligations, he will have nothing to gain by acting in the world, nor will he have anything to lose by not acting in the world. He will have more peace of mind only when he betakes himself away from all activities. *Naishkarmya* applies only to such people. They abstain from activities not because of laziness or *raga* and *dwesha*, but because they have nothing to gain from activities. They will be content only with sitting and meditating. The actionlessness of such people is called *naishkarmya*. So Krishna says: "Don't think, Arjuna, that by merely refusing to act, you are attaining *naishkarmya* because your refusal comes out of *raga-dwesha*. Only the actionlessness of people in whom the peace of mind is concomitant with refusal to act, is called *naishkarmya*. Their *naishkarmya* is only the outward manifestation of an essential state of consciousness behind it; "I am verily *Brahman*, always pure, perfect and blissful." So their innate tendency to act must have snapped. They have no more *srad̥dha* (interest) in action.

"In you the clinging has not gone. An hour ago, you came here ready to kill all the Kauravas. Meeting with insurmountable obstacles in the forms of Bhishma and Drona, you have got a *dwesha* for fighting with them. Can you, who is not rid of *raga-dwesha*, attain *naishkarmya*? Do that very act for which you have a *dwesha* now, as a *karma yogi* and get over your *raga*, *dwesha* and *bhaya* (fear). *Naishkarmya* is the effect of doing *karma* as a *karma yogi*. And you say, you prefer the life of a *sannyasin*, begging alms, to killing Bhishma and Drona. Do you know what

sannyasa is? True *sannyasa* is renouncing your *sankalpas*, *asa*, desires, thoughts, etc. and not mere physical possessions. Have you got over your *sariraabhimana* (attachment to the body), body consciousness, and intellect consciousness? A *sannyasin* ought not to have any clinging to name, popularity and fame. He must be the humblest being in the world; not even that, he must be a non-entity. Real *sannyasa* is in the mind. With your mind full of *raga-dwesha*, you cannot attain anything by merely taking on external *sannyasa*. If you go to the forest, even there you will be thinking of the things that you have left behind. You will be thinking of Yudhishtira and others and worrying about them. You will be wondering what turn the war has taken. You will not gain anything by assuming such a *sannyasa*."

Sankaracharya says in the beginning of his Gita Bhashya:

"Gita *sastra* contains the quintessence of all the essences that are contained in the Vedas. To understand the *tatva* contained in it is difficult but not impossible. Many pundits, in trying to go into the mere meanings of words, *vachyārtha*, have lost the essence, *tatvārtha*. Before they come to the end of the Gita, they contradict their own interpretation of the former chapters (portions). So I am undertaking to interpret the Gita in a discriminative way, to make it understood by people who have *viveka*—discriminative intellect."

The context of Sankara's introduction to the Gita will be clear from the meaning of the next *sloka*:

न हि कश्चित् क्षणमपि जातु तिष्ठत्यकर्मकृत् ।
कार्यते ह्यवशः कर्म सर्वः प्रकृतिजैर्गुणैः ॥

*Na hi kaschit kshanamapi jaatu tishthatyakarmakrit,
Kaaryate hyavasah karma sarvah prakritijarigunaih.*

“There is not a single human being in the world who can remain without *karma* even for a second, for everyone is made to act (compelled to act) by the qualities born of one's nature.”

What is *karma* (act)?

Many pundits have interpreted it as *vaidika karma*, ritualistic action. The sloka would then mean: “you cannot remain even for a short while without performing rituals.” It cannot be so. *Karma* here does not mean either working with *karmendriya* alone like walking, eating, etc. or ritualistic actions. Vedanta does not distinguish between secular actions and ritualistic actions, for the content or the propelling force behind both of them is *raga* and *dwesha*. Here, *karma* means any movement, vibration, *chalana*, in the body or mind. You are all sitting and listening to me, apparently inactive. But you are breathing, your ears carry the sound to the brain, there is a corresponding thought in you, which is a movement in the consciousness within. These are all actions. Even ‘thinking’ according to the Gita, is an action. Krishna says: “You cannot remain even for a fraction of a second without action.” (*Kshana* is even less than a second, it is the time taken for the breaking of a leaf or twig, i.e. the interval during which there is a sound of breaking.) Why is it you cannot remain inactive? For, you are forced to act by the qualities born of your own nature, *prakriti*, *swabhava*.

Our actions are governed by our innate character. There are three *gunas* operating, which determine our character. They are *satwa guna*, *rajo guna* and *tamo guna*.

(1) *Tamo guna*: Characteristics of people having a predominance of *tamo guna* are sloth, slumber and laziness. They get up late in the morning, go about their work with no enthusiasm. They are very slow to grasp anything. If at all they have interest in anything, it is in such time-killing activities as playing cards, gambling, etc. They are the lowest type of men.

(2) *Rajo guna*: The essential feature of *rajo guna* is activity. Those who think that their *sukha* depends upon the things that they can get through their activities, are called *rajogunatmikah* (people of *rajoguna*). They fret and fume like rats caught in a trap. "I must do this, I must do that" etc. They are caught up in activity to such an extent that they have no time to turn Godward. Even if you talk Vedanta to them, they may hear it, understand it, but still the *rajo guna* element is so strong in them that it will drag them back to activity. They require a good amount of sleep because of the exhaustion in moving about here and there. Finally, having no time to think of God, they come to the end of their lives, *me me kritah Kaalavrikena neetah*, caught as a lamb by the Kala-wolf.

(3) *Satva guna*: Whenever there is necessity to act physically, people of *satva guna* will act. They can discern and discriminate what to do and what not to do. Being almost free of *raga-dwesha* they will have perspicuity and intellectual keenness. Because of this they know what to do; when and how to do it. Anything they undertake will be a success. They will be entering into the minimum possible activity required for the maintenance of the body. The rest of the time they will devote to studying Vedanta and the higher sciences. Having a clear intellect, they will be efficient in their work and have

enough spare time to meditate and do *sadhana* to attain *mukti*. They won't sleep much, for they do not waste their energy in useless activity. But even *satvik* nature can bind you. Daily, for the past few days you have come here. Why? You have the desire to hear Vedanta. It is a *satvik* desire, no doubt, and better than *rajasik* or *tamasik* desires. In fact this *satvik* desire will be like a thorn that removes the other thorns, the *rajasik* and *tamasik* desires. But *satvik* nature also binds you. It binds you with a golden chain, whereas *rajas* and *tamas* bind you with copper and steel chains respectively. But a chain is a chain. So you have to go even beyond *satva guna*. There are many pundits who are intellectually masters of Vedanta and the scriptures, yet they are nowhere near *mukti*, because they do not do real *manana* and *nididhyasana* (meditation). They do not engage in *vichara*. They are content with *satva guna* and do not realise that they must transcend even *satva guna* in order to reach the Infinite Reality. Through *satva* we have to know the real *tatva* and for attaining the Supreme we must throw away even the *satva* and directly proceed there.

Krishna says: "We are bound absolutely by the three *gunas*. The capacity to think and be our original selves is almost clouded by the force of the three *gunas*."

How to get over these *gunas*? Krishna says in a later chapter:

दैवी ह्येषा गुणमयी मम माया दुरत्यया ।

मामेव ये प्रपद्यन्ते मायामेतां तरन्ति ते ॥

Daivee hyeshaa gunamayee mama maayaa duratyayaa

Maameva ye prapadyante maayaametaam taranti te.

“Those who take refuge in Me, the Infinite Reality, alone can cross over this *maya* created by *gunas*.”

Krishna, in the next two *slokas* of the third chapter points out the difference between:

(i) the apparent actionlessness of a man who outwardly keeps quiet but gives full freedom to his desire-filled mind to wander about as it likes; and

(ii) the real actionlessness of a man, who though outwardly working on in the world as any other man, has his senses and mind under firm control.

The *slokas* are very important and should be carefully studied and understood.

The first one says:

कर्मेन्द्रियाणि संयम्य य आस्ते मनसा स्मरन् ।

इन्द्रियार्थान् विमूढात्मा मिथ्याचारः स उच्यते ॥

Karmendriyani samyamya ya aaste manasaa smaran,

Indriyaarthaan vimoodhaatmaa mithyaachaarah sa uchyate.

“A man restraining his *karmendriyas* (organs of action) and allowing his *jnanendriyas* (organs of perception) to wander, is called a hypocrite, *mithyacharah*.”

Karmendriyas are the two legs, two hands, mouth and the organs of excretion. All our activities can be only through our *karmendriyas*. The *karmendriyas* do not pull us out. It is the sense organs—the eyes, the ear, the nose, the skin and the tongue—which pull us out. It is through the sense organs that we understand the world. Mind is having *sukha* and *dukkha* only through the sense organs. It is the sense organs, which are to be controlled and not the *karmendriyas*. If you go to a cinema or a cremation ground the pain to the legs is the same. It is

only the mind that gets *sukha* or *dukkha* coming through the sense organs which sensed the cinema or the cremation. If, restraining the *karmendriyas*, you think about the objects of the senses, you are a hypocrite.

A husband scolds his wife and the latter decides not to take food; the whole day she dwells upon the words which the husband uttered and which pained her. Though apparently inactive, her mind is thinking, her eyes are seeing and her ears and other sense organs are functioning. She, according to Krishna, is a hypocrite.

There is a beautiful story given in the Mahabharata illustrating this point. One Brahmin, Gautama, betook himself to the jungles and started doing intense *tapas*. He had restrained his *karmendriyas* but not this *jnanendriyas*. He had not taken care of his old parents, but had come to the jungles to do *tapas*. Repeating *mantras* crores and crores of times, he had attained some sort of mental concentration and powers. At noon each day he used to go to the nearby village and have his *bhiksha*.

One day, when he was on his way for *bhiksha*, he sat on a stone by the wayside. A crane was sitting on a branch of the tree just above his head. It passed excreta which fell on Gautama's head. Having a wrong sense of what is real purity, he thought he was polluted. He looked up with intense anger at the crane. Now, he had attained a measure of one-pointedness by his *tapas*. A mind which is focussed will have some power. Such *tapas* when misdirected is useless. Yet you get some power, though it will not give you *santi*, peace of mind. When Gautama looked up at the crane, it was burnt to ashes by the power of his anger. Seeing that, he was praising himself for his power; yet, at the same time there came in

him a taint of pity. He thought: "Poor creature, it did not know what it was doing. Have I done the right thing?"

He then got up and started again for the village. The first house he came to was one Anasuya's house. She was the wife of Atri Maharshi. He stood in front of the house and said: *bhavati bhiksham dehi*: O lady of the house, give me *bhiksha*, food.

Just then Anasuya's husband entered the house. He had been out and was tired, hungry and thirsty. What was Anasuya's duty? Her first duty was to her husband and children. She was a great *karma yogi*. She gave water to her husband for his ablutions, gave him a seat and served him food. While he was taking food, Gautama was standing outside and watching. He was very angry, thinking: "I, a great *tapasvi* and a Brahmin *Brahmachari* is standing here. This woman is not respecting me properly. Is her husband a greater *rishi* than me, that she serves him first?" He was just about to curse her, when Anasuya called out from within the house: "O Gautama, do not think Anasuya is a crane."

The moment Gautama heard it, he was wonderstruck. "What is this? The crane was burnt by my curse a mile away. This woman could not have seen it. Not only that, how could she ever understand what thoughts were within me and that I was going to curse her? What is this power in her that not even I have attained by my *tapas*?" He prostrated in front of Anasuya and said: "O Mother, please pardon me. I have done wrong." Anasuya said: "Alright, my son. After serving my husband I will come and talk to you." After her husband had taken his food, she served Gautama with food. Then

Gautama said: "What is the wonderful power you have? You are just an ordinary house-wife working in the kitchen and attending to your husband and children. How have you attained this wonderful power?" Anasuya replied: "O Gautama, you restrained the *karmendriyas* but not the *jnanendriyas*. The crane's excreta fell on you; the notion that you had been polluted went to your mind and you cursed it. Then you came here for food. Since you did not get food in time you were angry and were about to curse me. The reason was you had no control over your hunger. What good can you attain by restraining your *karmendriyas* without controlling the *jnanendriyas*? Besides, you did not do your duty to your parents.

"So restrain your *jnanendriyas*, and let the *karmendriyas* work on. Be a *karma yogi*. Do your duty to your parents. This is the way to proceed towards *mukti*.

"I have attained *mukti* in the kitchen, in my house, while doing my duty as *karma yoga* as it is the indispensable step for purification. I have not read many scriptures and texts, nor have I had *gurukula vasa* (apprenticeship with a teacher). So if you want to learn more of Vedanta, go to Dharma Vyadha. He is a butcher in Mithila Rajya. He will teach you practical Vedanta more clearly."

Gautama reached Mithila after two days of walking. He was going through a lane when Dharma Vyadha, whose shop was in that lane, called out: "Are you not Gautama? Has not Anasuya sent you? I am just now engaged in my work. Wait for some time. Then I shall close the shop and take you to my home." Gautama was greatly surprised at this. After some time Dharma Vyadha closed his shop and took Gautama to his home. There, he gave food to his aged parents first.

Then he gave a seat to Gautama and fed him. Only then did he take food himself. Later he gave out to Gautama the technique of *karma yoga*, citing how he himself, even though a butcher, had attained *jivanmukti* by adopting *karma yoga* as the indispensable first step.

Gautama went back to his parents, looked after them properly. Purifying himself through *karma yoga*, he perfected *jnana* and became a *mukta* later.

Thus the restraining of *jnanendriyas* is the primary thing in religion. The present-day religion has degraded into a form in which we restrain our *karmendriyas* and not the *jnanendriyas*. We put on so much of *vibhuti* or *chandan* on our forehead and go to temples and think we are religious. But can you control your passions and desires? If you had been seeing four cinemas per month, are you able to reduce it to two, one or none? Are you able to go without the early morning coffee for one day? Are you able to extricate yourself from the bad habits to which you are accustomed? Religion starts here in eating, drinking, seeing cinemas, hearing music etc. Have control over the *indriyas*. If you do so, the mind will not be disturbed. It will not be acted upon and tossed about by the *panchendriyas*. You can start meditating and reach God. On the other hand, the mind of one who has not had any *indriya niyamana* (controlling of sense organs) will be dragged out by his senses. He cannot attain God. Not only that, he cannot have a proper secular life even. Be a master of your *indriyas* and not their abject slave. This is the science and technique of Vedanta.

Now, what should be the correct method?

यस्त्विन्द्रियाणि मनसा नियम्यारभतेर्जुन ।

कमेन्द्रियैः कर्मयोगं असक्तः स विशिष्यते ॥

*Yastvindriyaani manasaa niyamyaarabhaterjuna,
Karmendriyaih karmayogam asaktah sa visishyate.*

“Restraining your sense organs by the mind, act with the *karmendriyas*. When the sense organs attract the mind, control them then.” There is a beautiful *sloka* in the second chapter, which describes how the sense organs act:

इन्द्रियाणां हि चरतां यन्मनोऽनुविधीयते ।

तदस्य हरति प्रज्ञां वायुर्नावमिवाम्भसि ॥

*Indriyaanaam hi charataam yanmanonuvidehyate,
Tadasya harati prajnaam vaayurnaavamivaambhasi.*

“The mind, following the wandering sense organs, carries away (or destroys) the discrimination of a person, just as a strong breeze carries away a boat on water.”

The nature of the sense organs is such that they always go out, issue forth. Even if the mind goes after one sense organ, it is sufficiently strong to spoil the mind. Say, your friends are gambling on a Sunday. You are slightly interested and you just go and watch. Your friends ask you to join, but you refuse. After some persuasion you join them and lose ten rupees you had with you. Your friends tell you that you will recover that and something more also, if you continue to play. As you are keen on recovering the ten rupees, you are easily persuaded and you again lose another twenty-five rupees. Then you come away with added regret.

Adi Sankaracharya was walking through the road one day when he saw a kite flying with a piece of bone, chased by a number of crows. The kite was dodging the crows from tree to tree, but at last it got exhausted and dropped the bone. The moment it dropped the bone, the crows stopped chasing it and went after the bone. Sankaracharya seeing all this, prostrated before the kite and said: "You are my *guru*, for you have taught me a lesson. As long as I have even a *kaupin* (loin cloth), there will be somebody trying to snatch it away. If I have a rupee, there will be many parasites trying to get it. You have taught me that the way to peace is *sarvasankalpa-tyaga* (renouncing all thoughts) and *sarvavastu-parityaga* (renouncing all worldly possessions). I have also to throw away all desires of the world, if I am to attain *mukti*." Vedantins have been keen observers of the world and have been learning from it. When the kite was after its palate, the crows were after the kite, in hot pursuit. When it dropped the bone and its desire too along with it, the crows parted.

In *Vivekachudamani*, Sankara says in a beautiful *sloka* how going after even one sense organ, brings about bondage and even death:

शब्दादिभिः पञ्चभिरेव पञ्च पञ्चत्वमायुः स्वगुणेनबद्धाः ।
 कुरंगमातंगपतंगमीनभृगा नरः पञ्चभिरञ्चितः किं ॥

Sabdaadibhih panchabhireva pancha
Panchatvamaapuh svagunenabaddhaah,
Kurangamaatanga patangameena-
bhringaa narah panchabhiranchitah kim.

A musk deer, *kuranga*, is caught by a hunter playing on a special bamboo flute; hearing the melody it forgets itself and remains absorbed in it. The music is heard by the ears and this brings about its doom, for the deer is then shot or caught alive.

Maatanga means an elephant. If a wild elephant is to be caught, usually a pit is dug and is covered by bamboos and branches of trees. Very near the pit a female elephant is tied. The elephant gets great pleasure by *sparsa*, touching the female elephant. While seeking the pleasure of touch, it falls into the pit and is caught. Here the sense organ which brings about the capture of the elephant is the skin.

Patanga—Small insects always fly around a brilliant light. They mistake the light for food and, because of the heat emanating from the light, they die. Here they are brought to their doom by the sense organ, eye.

Meena—Fish gets caught when, without thinking, it bites the worm dangling from the angle. It goes after the tongue to catch its prey and is caught in turn.

Bhringa—Black beetles go from flower to flower. They go after their nose, to the flowers emanating fragrance, as there must be honey in them. But some of the flowers give out such a powerful fragrance that they become unconscious while drinking the nectar and so fall down and die.

All of these species, each going after one sense organ, court their own death or bondage; what to say of the fate of man, in whom all the five sense organs are fully developed and who goes after all of them! We have, therefore, to restrain all our sense organs. Restraining of the sense

organs is religion in practice. If a man does *pooja* and *japa* but does not control his sense organs, he is a hypocrite. The present birth-control methods show our depravity. Those who use them will lose all their vitality and shatter their nervous system. Instead, our controlling capacity is the trait to be developed.

Absolute stoppage, *nigraha*, of any sense pleasure is not advised, but only *niyamana* or control. Nobody says 'do not take food', but 'do not be after food'. In short, adopt a golden mean. In a later chapter, Krishna says:

युक्ताहारविहारस्य युक्तचेष्टस्य कर्मसु ।

युक्तस्वप्नावबोधस्य योगो भवति दुःखहा ॥

*Yuktaahaaravihaarasya yuktacheshtasya karmasu,
Yuktasvapnaavabodhasya yogo bhavathi dukkhahaa.*

Follow the golden middle path in everything. Be moderate in eating, drinking, sleeping, keeping awake and in enjoying the pleasures of the senses. You need not deny yourself the pleasures of the senses completely, but anything in excess is harmful, not only for spiritual advancement, but even for success in material life. A life of moderation is the real, fruitful life.

You may play cards or go to a cinema, but you should be able to get up and go away even when you are engrossed in the picture. You should be the master and not the slave of your senses.

While Swami Vivekananda was in Alwar (Rajasthan), a very old man approached him and wanted him to give advice on realisation. The Swamiji rebuked him and sent him away. Others who were there asked Swamiji as to the reason why he did such a thing. Swamiji replied:

“He was all along after *vishayas* (sense pleasures). Now what has he got to forsake to attain *mukti*? He must have something to forsake. I gave him a shock treatment so that he might start thinking and, if not in this birth, he may improve at least in his next.”

Thus, control now, when you have something to control. Give up the clinging to the pleasures of the senses now, when you have it, because you cannot give it up later when you have lost the capacity for enjoying it.

Bhagawan says further:

नियतं कुरु कर्म त्वं कर्म ज्यायो ह्यकर्मणः ।

शरीरयात्रापि च ते न प्रसिध्येदकर्मणः ॥

*Niyatam kuru karma tvam karma jyaayo hyakarmanah,
Sareerayaatraapi cha te na prasidhyedakarmanah.*

“Do your bounden, *niyatam*, duty as a *karma yogi*. Acting thus is better than inactivity. You cannot even live for a short while if you are completely and literally inactive.”

Here *niyata* means *swabhava niyata* or *prakriti niyata* (according to the innate nature and mental make-up). Whatever work you do in accordance with your nature and mental make-up is *niyata karma*. It does not mean the work that your father was doing. Nor does it mean *jati karma* or *jati dharma* (actions pertaining to one's caste) as misinterpreted by the orthodox people believing in rituals. If you interpret it so, suppose you are a Brahmin, you have to daily perform *ahuti*, *homa*, etc. Further, according to *smriti*, one (especially a Brahmin) working for a *mlechchha* i.e. a foreigner, is a *jatibhrashta* (outcaste) having no scope for *mukti*. If you are going to take this

interpretation, then you must observe the “Do’s” and “Don’ts” of it strictly and literally and not simply when it suits you to do so.

We have no need for such *dharma*. In spite of whatever work we are engaged in, if we know what Vedanta is and regulate ourselves Vedantically, we can throw away all “Do’s” and “Don’ts.” The “Do’s” and “Don’ts” are only for those people who are unable to regulate themselves in their worldly conduct, by excelling in ethics and purity.

Krishna says:

सर्वधर्मान् परित्यज्य मामेकं शरणं व्रज ।

अहं त्वा सर्वपापेभ्यो मोक्षयिष्यामि मा शुचः ॥

Sarvadharmaan parityajya maamekam saranam vraja,

Aham tvaa sarvapaapebhhyo mokshayishyami ma suchah.

“Throw away all *dharmas*, “Do’s” and “Don’ts” and take refuge in Me, the Infinite Self, seated within you as your own Soul.”

So, do the work in which you are engaged, as best as possible, with a spirit of detachment to the result. Do not complain about your circumstances and surroundings. They have been ordered by your past *karmas*. Instead of complaining, change your attitude towards that very work you find mental pain in doing.

Till today you were thinking: “I am working in this office because I have no other go. I need money. I receive a salary to support my family.” But from now on your attitude must be: “In this Infinite Machine called the world, I am one cog. Somebody or other is going to benefit by my work. Whether I work in this office or another,

when I look at it from the Infinite Angle, it is all for the world. So let me do my work properly, without attachment to the result.” If you work so, with a clear and clean mind, without *raga-dwesha*, understand that that Divine Expression will be in your work. Krishna says in another place:

यतः प्रवृत्तिर्भूतानां येन सर्वमिदं ततम् ।

स्वकर्मणा तमभ्यर्च्य सिद्धिं विन्दति मानवः ॥

Yatah pravrittirbhootaanaam yena sarvamidam tatam,

Svakarmanaa tamabhyarchya siddhim vindati maanavah.

“The Infinite Power from which everything has emanated is within, without, is permeating and transcending everything. Man attains perfection by worshipping that power, through doing his own duty as *karma yoga*.” The capacity of the *karmendriyas* to work, the mind to feel and the intellect to think are all expressions of that Infinite Power, *Brahman*. Not only that, since the Infinite Power is everywhere, it is also in everyone whom you come in contact with, in also the very process of doing your *karma*. So, doing the work without *raga*, *dwesha*, attachment to the fruit, is really *sarveswara pooja* (worship of the Infinite). It is not only in the temple, *yajnasala* or *yagasala* that you can do *pooja*, but you can worship the Infinite by your actions in the house, market place or in the office, wherever you may be. Bring about the inner change in whatever work you may be doing. The potential force of our past *karmas* brings about the circumstances in which we are placed in this life. Our very nature, *svabhava*, is regulated and controlled by the unspent force of our past actions. So, be in it and yet, try to be out of it through *karma yoga*.

“So Arjuna,” Krishna says, “your nature has been moulded by your past *karmas*. You are a Kshatriya (one belonging to the warrior race) out and out. So the action you are best fitted for is fighting for a righteous cause. It is your *niyata karma* (bounden duty). So do the very *karma* you are best fitted for as a *karma yogi*. Do not think that you can have *jnana* if you run away from action. Your *svabhava niyatam karma* (action according to one’s nature) is not only better than inaction, but it can also lead you to *mukti*, *Moksha*, if done as *karma yoga*. You will have no sin coming from it.”

यज्ञार्थात् कर्मणोन्यत्र लोकोऽयं कर्मबन्धनः ।

तदर्थं कर्म कौन्तेय मुक्तसङ्गः समाचर ॥

*Yajnaarthaat karmanonyatra lokoyam karmabandhanah,
Tadartham karma Kaunteya muktasangah samaachara.*

You will not be able to maintain your body (life) even for a short time, if you are completely, literally, inactive. Not physical activity alone, but any movement, *chalana*, is action. Thoughts being movements on the consciousness, even thinking is action. So, strictly speaking, you should not even think. Real *jnana* is committing suicide of the mind, for once the mind (i. e. flow of thoughts) is annihilated, you are directly face to face with Pure Consciousness, *Sachchidananda*.

There is a *sloka* in *Yogavasistha*:

मनसोभ्युदयो नाशो मनोनाशो महोदयः ।

ज्ञमनो नाशमभ्येति मनोज्ञस्य हि शृङ्खला ॥

*Manasobhyudayo naaso manonaaso mahodayah,
Jnamano naasamabhyeti manojnasya hi shrinkhalaa.*

“The very coming into existence of the mind is real destruction, for along with the mind *sukha* and *dukkha* also come and we are ever agitated and tossed about by our emotions and thoughts. The real glory is in killing the mind, *manonasa*.

“The chain that binds us is *ajnana* (ignorance). The links of this chain can be broken through *samabhava* and *karma yoga*. The mind will then be less agitated. Such a mind alone can meditate and attain *mukti*. A *jnani*'s mind dies.

“So, Arjuna, instead of committing suicide of the body by complete inactivity, use the body as an instrument for evolution. With the body alone can you do your *dharma*, *karma yoga*, and through this alone can you attain *Moksha*.”

तस्मादसक्तः सततं कार्यं कर्म समाचार ।

असक्तो ह्याचरन्कर्म परमाप्नोति पूरुषः ॥

Tasmaadasaktah satatam kaaryam karma samaachara,
Asakto hyaacharankarma paramaapnoti poorushah.

“So Arjuna, do your duty that you might even otherwise have performed. You did not invite the fight. It was forced upon you. Your duty as a *kshatriya* is to protect *dharma* and destroy *adharma*, from whatever source it emanates. Here the source of *adharma* is your own cousin and his brothers and in fighting against them you will have to kill some of your near and dear ones. But you should not try to avoid it because it is distasteful. You should not leave the present sphere of activity because it is an unpleasant one and seems to be full of defects. Remaining in it, simply change the colour of your actions

by changing your attitude towards them. Whatever actions come your way, whatever duties you have to perform, do them to the best of your ability, without attachment (either to the result of the action or to your body, mind and ego). Any individual who can thus perform his actions without attachment, *sakti*, can definitely reach the Supreme.

तस्मादसक्तः सततं कार्यं कर्म समाचर ।

Tasmadasaktah satatam karyam karma samachara

Whenever you have any doubt, this is the *mantra* for you. Have *samabhava*, go beyond *sukha*, *dukkha*. Rid yourself of *raga*, *dwesha*, attachment and selfishness. Do the work before you, the best way you can, and be detached from the result. Be honest in all your dealings. Do not be afraid of anyone. Even if it costs you your job, do not resort to falsehood. Even supposing that by being honest you lose your job, be absolutely certain that a better job is waiting, extending its hands to you. *Bhagavan* himself assures you:

पार्थ नैवेह नामुत्र विनाशस्तस्य विद्यते ।

न हि कल्याणकृत्कश्चित् दुर्गतिं तात गच्छति ॥

Partha naiveha naamutra vinaasastasya vidyate

Na hi kalyaanakritkaschit durgatim taata gachchhati.

“A man who goes through the right and noble path will never come to any difficulty, nor has he any peril here in this world or hereafter.”

क्षिप्रं भवति धर्मात्मा शश्वच्छान्तिं निगच्छति ।

कौन्तेय प्रतिजानीहि न मे भक्तः प्रणश्यति ॥

*Kshipram bhavanti dharmaatma
sasvachchhaantim nigachchhati,
Kaunteya pratijaaneehi
na me bhaktah pranasyati.*

“My real *bhakta* will never perish. A man truly devoted to me, the Infinite Self, will never perish. Moreover, he will become a noble soul immediately and attain that permanent peace at once.”

Whenever you have any doubt, you need not go running here and there asking for other peoples' advice. Just keep quiet. Your heart will advise you. What it says may not seem to you the correct thing at the moment. But act upon it. Subsequent events will justify your action. Kalidasa says:

सतां हि सन्देहपथेषु वस्तुषु प्रमाणमन्तःकरणप्रवृत्तयः ।

*Sataam hi sandehapatheshu vastushu
pramanamaantahkaranapravrittayah.*

“Noble and meritorious people, when they have any doubts about anything, do not consult books or other people. They consult their own Within. Whatever indication comes from their own inner being, will be the right answer and remedy.”

This is how great people act. This is how each and every *Sanatana Dharmi* should act.

Thus when Krishna pointed out the path of *karma yoga*, Arjuna wants to ask him whether anyone in the world has actually attained *mukti* without relinquishing activity, by doing *karma yoga*. Krishna senses this question in the mind of Arjuna and answers:

कर्मणैव हि संसिद्धिं आस्थिता जनकादयः ।

लोकसंग्रहमेवापि संपश्यन् कर्तुमर्हसि ॥

*Karmanaiva hi samsiddhim assthitaa Janakaadayah,
Lokasamgrahamevaapi sampasyan kartumarhasi.*

“Arjuna, King Janaka and others like him, who had much heavier responsibilities than you are having attained *mukti* without relinquishing activity. Doing their duties as *karmayogis* they attained the Supreme. Even if you look from the point of view of *lokasamgraha* (good of the world), you should keep on acting in the world as a *karma yogi*. -

Lokasamgraha is not something that is the sole concern of politicians and the government. Each and everyone can do his bit. How? If you are a perfect *karma yogi*, equipoised in *samabhava*, you become a symbol, example for others to emulate. That way you can spread goodness around you. If you can win over one soul and turn him to the path of *mukti*, then you are doing the greatest *lokasamgraha*.

When you start on this path, relatives and friends may criticise you, ridicule you and may try to pull you back to the old level. Everyone around you may try to make you the old fool again. But be firm. Once they realise that you are really sincere and serious, they will slowly start imitating you. Gradually they will also evolve. This is the greatest good you can do to the world. Krishna tells Arjuna: “Even supposing you have no desire to do *karma* and have nothing to gain by engaging in action, if you consider the welfare (well-being) of the masses, you must go on acting in the world”, for;

यद्यदाचरति श्रेष्ठस्तत्तदेवेतरो जनः ।

स यत्प्रमाणं कुरुते लोकस्तदनुवर्तते ॥

*Yadyadaacharati sreshthastattadevetaro janah,
Sa yatpramaanam kurute lokastadanuvartate.*

“What a man of greatness and nobility does, the lesser men will also do; they imitate him.” They will take him to be an example for them to emulate. When a man has come into prominence and is respected and adored by the people, the masses will not care to analyse and inquire into his actions to see whether he has acted rightly or wrongly. They will blindly imitate him. “Oh Arjuna, you are a prince, noted for your chivalry, courage and skill in archery. People look up to you as an example to be followed. If you run away now, what will the people think? They will not understand your change of heart, but mistaking it to be cowardice, will themselves be demoralised and will run away from the battlefield. Will that be *lokasamgraha* (good of the world)? You are so placed that whatever you set up as the standard will be followed by the people. It is your duty now to set up the right example. Fight on as a *karma yogi* with *samabhava* and detachment. Teach them *karma yoga* theoretically and practically by your actions.”

This advice of Krishna applies not only to Arjuna, but to each and every one of us. Each of us is looked up to by someone or other. If you are a father or mother, the children look up to you. If you are a master, the servant looks up to you. You have a duty not only to yourself but to those around you also. You must act in

the world in such a way that you set an example for those around you to follow.

You can see how people set either good or bad examples, by a number of incidents in your daily life.

If the officer in charge of a department comes to the office at 11·00 a. m. every day, you can be sure that the staff gets there not a minute earlier than 10·55. If the officer leaves at 3·00 p. m., the office is empty at 3·05.

If the head of a family spends his time playing cards, is it any wonder that the children excel at cards and gambling, rather than in their studies? Every father and mother want their children to study well and become excellent in every field. But how many of them realise that they themselves are to blame if the children do not turn out well? When the mother spends all her time in idle gossip neglecting even her household duties, when the father wastes his time playing cards, gambling and in such other activities and when both of them dislike intensely being 'bothered' by their children, how can the children learn good habits? How can they expect the children to be studious when the parents have poor reading habits?—the mother confining her 'reading' to some cheap magazines, and the father to his daily newspaper? Is it not the responsibility of every father and mother to set good examples to their children by their very behaviour? Be ethically perfect. Cultivate good habits. Utilise your spare time in reading good books on Vedanta and religion. Spend some time each day teaching your children the fundamentals of our *Sanatana Dharma* and telling *puranic* stories to illustrate your point. Let your very life be a lesson to the children

on Vedanta. If you do that, you will be radiating *ananda* and joy around you and the children will start imbibing your good qualities. You will then see that not only do your children become very good, but your own spiritual development will be very rapid.

The same applies in a wider sense to the national and political fields. Mahatma Gandhi, who lived for truth and non-violence, could lift up a whole nation from lethargy and disunity, and cut asunder its bondage of ignominious slavery. Could he have done that if he had not lived what he preached? His very life was a dedication to the cause and people were not slow to follow him with enthusiasm. If there are a dozen such great people in a country, that country will be a veritable paradise, for the people cannot but admire and follow their examples.

अभितो ब्रह्मनिर्वाणं वर्तते विदितात्मनाम् ।

Abhito Brahmanirvaanam vartate viditatmanaam.

Their perfection and *jnana* will be overflowing around them.

There is none in the world who does not want to improve. Goodness, as I have repeatedly stressed, is as contagious as badness.

Thus, whether you are a politician holding sway over the whole nation, or just an ordinary citizen with only your children looking up to you, whether you are the mightiest or the humblest, you still can do the greatest good to the world by being a true *karma yogi*. Without trying to be a leader of the people, you will, by your very nature, draw people to you. By leading such a pure life

of *karma yoga*, you will not only be progressing rapidly towards *mukti*, but unconsciously you will lead others on to the same path. Krishna then cites his own example to illustrate this point.

न मे पार्थास्ति कर्तव्यं त्रिषु लोकेषु किञ्चन ।

नानवाप्तमवाप्तव्यं वर्त एव च कर्मणि ॥

*Na me Paarthaasti kartavyam trishu lokeshu kinchana,
Naanavaaptamavaaptavyam varta eva cha karmani.*

“Arjuna, take my own example. I have not an iota of duty to be performed. Nor is there anything unattained that should be attained by me. Yet I engage myself in action. I have the supreme *ananda* emanating from my inner personality. I have completely left off the notion that I am the body, mind and intellect and I am seated firmly on the *sakshi*. I have no *kartavya* (duty) to be performed, for duty will arise only if I look at the world with a sense of duality. Seated in the great glory of *Satchidananda*, I am perfectly contented. The sense of duty comes only when you have something to attain from the world, through which you hope to derive some joy. I am beyond any duty, because I am *Satchidananda swarupa* myself. I have nothing to gain at all by engaging in action. Still I am doing work. Because, if I do not engage in action and just keep quiet, others around me, who look up to me as their leader, will also imitate me and keep quiet. They will not understand my inner attitude of perfect contentment but see only my inactivity and think that laziness is a virtue. They will blindly imitate me and cease to work. So I am working just for the sake of those who look up to me for direction and

guidance. By acting as a *karma yogi* I am setting an example to them, following which they will progress towards *Mukti*. Since you are also a man of importance, held in great esteem by the people, you should also show them the correct way of life by being a *karma yogi* yourself."

These words show how Sri Krishna wanted the people to follow his advice and act as *karma yogis* in the world. Instead of taking his advice and following his footsteps, we are content installing his image on a pedestal and worshipping it. We think he is an *avatara purusha* and so deserves to be worshipped by us, but we never care to know how he wanted us to lead our life. Vedanta does not teach of special *avataras* (incarnations of God). It considers each and every one a veritable *avatara*. What we consider as *avataras* were all great realised souls. No one, whom we consider as an *avatara*, was considered so by his contemporaries. Krishna, whom we take to be an *avatara*, was not considered so in his times. In the 11th chapter of the Bhagawad Gita, Arjuna says:

सखेति मत्वा प्रसभं यदुक्तं हे कृष्ण हे यादव हे सखेति ।

अजानता महिमानं तवेदं मया प्रमादात् प्रणयेन वापि ॥

यच्चावहासार्थमसत्कृतोसि विहारशय्यासनभोजनेषु ।

एकोऽथवाप्यच्युत तत्समक्षं तत्क्षामये त्वामहमप्रमेयम् ॥

Sakheti matvaa prasabham yaduktam

he Krishna he Yaadava he sakheti,

Ajaanataa mahimaanam tavedam

mayaa pramaadaat pranayena vaapi,

Yachchaavahaasaarthamasatkritosi

vihaarasayyaasanabhojaneshu,

Ekothavaapyachyuta tatsamaksham

tatkshaamaye tvaamahamaprameyam.

“O Krishna, hitherto I thought you were just a friend of mine. Without a proper understanding of your *mahima* (greatness), I have called you “O friend, O cow-herd” and so on. Out of ignorance or foolishness or on account of my excessive love for you, I have jokingly insulted you and disrespected you in so many ways while we were playing, sleeping, sitting and gossiping and while taking food together. How foolish I have been, not to have realised your greatness?” Arjuna was about seventy years and Krishna about eighty years old at the time of the Mahabharata war. Yet, till then Arjuna who was the closest friend of Krishna had not understood him as a realised soul or as an *avatara*. The *avatara* theory is a recent one. Centuries after a great soul like Krishna or Sri Rama existed, people who were greatly impressed by stories of their greatness and purity, created a sort of halo around their names. Poets wrote epics about them emphasising their good qualities and omitting their bad ones, creating an impression in the minds of the people that they (the great souls about whom the epic is written) were not ordinary mortals, but veritable incarnations of God. It will not be surprising if, in another hundred years or two hundred years, Ramakrishna Paramahansa and Ramana Maharshi are considered as *avatars*. According to Vedanta, we are reducing their glory when we call great realised souls as *avatars*. For, an *avatara* is just an incarnation, manifestation of *Brahman*, whereas a realised soul having become one with *Brahman* is verily *Brahman*.

So, instead of doing *pooja* of Krishna and worshipping him as an *avatara*, we would be doing a better *pooja* if we obey him and act as he directed us. Be like Krishna. Become a Krishna.

You can find that the greatest glory of Krishna was that he never shed a single drop of tear throughout his life. Whatever happened to him or around him, he was always floating in *ananda* as cork floats on water. He lived as he preached. He gives us the assurance in the Bhagawad Gita that each and every one of us, by taking his advice, can become a true *karma yogi* and through *karma yoga* realise the *Brahman*. He says:

ईश्वरः सर्वभूतानां हृद्देशेऽर्जुन तिष्ठति ।

भ्रामयन्सर्वभूतानि यन्त्रारूढानि मायया ॥

Iswarah sarvabhootaanaam hriddeserjuna tishthati,

Bhraamayansarvabhootaani yantraaroodhaani maayayaa.

“Do not think I am *Iswara*, for then you will be mistaking me for this body. I am not the body. The Infinite Principle, the *Iswara* in me, is also seated in the seat of consciousness of each and every being. He causes all beings to move as though mounted on a machine. A man may be working mechanically. He may not know it. But the power behind the mechanism is the Infinite Principle.”

तमेव शरणं गच्छ सर्वभावेन भारत ।

तत्प्रसादात्परां शान्तिं स्थानं प्राप्स्यसि शाश्वतम् ॥

Tameva saranam gachchha sarvabhaavena Bhaarata,

Tatprasaadaat paraam saantim sthaanam praapsyasi sadsvatam.

“O Arjuna, recognise that One Principle, take refuge in Him, with all your being. By His grace (i. e. by the grace of the *Iswara* or soul seated in you) you will attain supreme peace, *paraam saantim*, and the permanent abode, *sasvatam sthanam* viz. *Jivanmukti*, *Satchidananda*.

Krishna by living his teachings has shown us the way. He sustained with cheerfulness, and without the least regret, everything that life presented him. Even when he found that it was his imperative, unavoidable duty to kill his entire clan and thus put an end to the *Yadava vamsa*, he did that most unpleasant duty also with a smile. Live like Krishna.

Be cheerful, be smiling always. Let not your smile be born out of a temporary satiation of the senses, but let it sprout out of the inner contentment, *ananda*.

Outlive *sukha* and *dukkha*, have *samabhava* and cheerfulness as your constant companions. You must be able to meet death cheerfully. You cannot die cheerfully unless you live cheerfully. Be a veritable Krishna!

Chapter 10

KARMA YOGA—III

In philosophy the first and foremost thing as well as the last thing to be learnt is the same, viz: *drik drisya viveka*, that is the real personality, the real perceiver in us. We think it is our body, mind, intellect and the ego put together that is our real personality. But, behind the mind, body, intellect and ego, there is something else which is non-changing, non-moving. The moment we know that that is our real personality, that all other things of the world are subject to change and destruction, we have to leave the realm of body, mind and intellect and go to the witness, the perceiver within.

The difficulty in this world is that people do not have *drik drisya viveka*—knowledge as to what is the perceiver and what is the perceived. Although the mind and the body function, behind these (the mind and body) there is something that supplies the power to them. That is the real perceiver. When anything happens to our body or mind, we think we are suffering. The idea “I am sick, I am blind, I am hurt, I am unhappy,” etc. are all born out of our identification with the body and mind. When your body is sick, make an enquiry as to who is sick. “Am I sick? No, the body is sick. Am I the body? No. I am not the body. The body is mine. I am That, which is the life behind the body, the possessor of the

body, the *drik* or perceiver within the body.” Thus we have to trace it within ourselves.

All *karmas* (actions) we do are performed with the understanding that ‘I am the body, I am the mind and I am the intellect’. As long as this *bodha* remains, human beings are not going to come to a state where they can put a stop to these *karmas* and attain *Mukti*. When these three equipments are themselves subject to change and when all the things they come in contact with also are subject to change, how can we have peace that is non-changing, if we identify ourselves with these equipments?

Sankara refers to this constantly recurring misunderstanding of mankind in the very opening statement of his *Brahma Sutra Bhashya*:

युष्मत् अस्मत् प्रत्ययगोचरयोः विषयविषयिणोः तमःप्रकाशवत्
विरुद्धस्वभावयोः इतरेतरभावानुपपत्तौ सिद्धायां तद्धर्माणामपि सुतरां
इतरेतरभावानुपपत्तिः ।

*Yushmat asmat pratyayagocharayoh vishayavishayinoh
tamuh prakaasavat viruddhasvabhaavayoh itaretarabhaava-
anupapattau siddhaayaam, taddharmaanaamapi sutaraam
itaretarabhaavaanupapattih.*

What is the real “I” in you and what is objective to you? You think the world is objective and the subjective ‘I’ is your body and mind. But the body, mind and intellect are as objective to you—the real “I”, the real personality in you—as the world outside. Locate that personality and know it. When you know it, that being non-changing and permanent, you will remain there unaffected by the *sukhas* and *dukkhas* that the world may

offer you. Without knowing this, we think we are the body, mind etc. When the very thing which is having *sukha* or *dukkha*, i. e. the body and mind, are subject to change and are perishable, how can we have non-changing *ananda*?

Krishna deals with this ignorance in man in the latter part of the third chapter in the Gita:

प्रकृतेः क्रियमाणानि गुणैः कर्माणि सर्वशः ।

अहंकारविमूढात्मा कर्ताहमिति मन्यते ॥

*Prakriteh kriyamaanaani gunaih karmaani sarvasah,
Ahankaaravimoodhaatmaa kartaahamiti manyate.*

The real "I", *sakshi*, is the inner personality. It can never associate itself with the body, mind and intellect. But man, in his ignorance, has a feeling as though it is associating with them (body, mind and intellect) and so works in the world with this basic misunderstanding. All people in the world act because, in their body, mind and intellect there are three *gunas* operating, viz. *satva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. These *gunas* do not and cannot operate in the *sakshi*, the perceiver, the soul within, which is Pure Consciousness, unpolluted, untouched, untainted. The effect of the three *gunas* in the body, mind and intellect takes the form of terrible attachment—attachment to worldly things including the body, mind and intellect. Whenever you have success or failure in your worldly dealing, you will be affected by joy and sorrow. You will be tossed about by success and failure and the world will play with your emotions as a monkey-keeper plays with his monkey.

As long as these three *gunas* remain in us, we will remain thus and suffer. Even *satva guna* binds us as I have

already pointed out earlier. The difference in the three *gunas* is their attachment to different things. A *tamasik* man is attached excessively to his body. He lives only to satisfy his bodily passions and desires. He is caught up in sleep, sloth and laziness. A *rajasik* man is attached to his body and mind. He is always engaged in feverish activity because he thinks by these activities he can gain worldly benefits and derive joy from them. Thus he is tied down by his activities. A *satvik* man is attached to his intellect more than to his body or mind. He is caught up by his attachment to his intellectual accomplishments. But attachment is attachment. He derives joy from reading books on philosophy and the higher sciences of life and analysing about them. The *satvik* man is as much bound as a *rajasik* or *tamasik* man. He must transcend even his *satva guna* if he aims at *Mukti*. That is why Vedanta says: "Read me, understand me, and then throw me away. Realise, actualise by practising *sadhana*, what you have studied."

Not much of intellectual eminence is required for attaining *Moksha*. Just the knowledge that there is a non-decaying, undying principle in us which is not affected by *sukha* or *dukkha* and which is of the nature of Pure Consciousness, Pure Bliss, is enough for many people of ordinary intellect to turn inwards and realise the Soul. You may have studied all the *sastras* and scriptures. Still you will be as much disgruntled and discontented as any other man of the world who has not even heard of the *sastras*, if you remain in theory itself, without practising it.

Thus operated by these *gunas* a man identifies himself with the body, mind and intellect. This *ajnana* or *avidya*

which makes him think that his real personatity, the real 'I' is associating itself with his body, mind and intellect, keeps him bound in *samsara sogara*. This *ajnana* creates in him the egoistic *ahamkara*, 'I am the doer, I am the enjoyer'. He takes pride that 'I did this and I did that', 'this is mine and that is mine'. Thus constantly harping on what all he has done and what all he possesses, he meets his end, namely death—*me me kritah kaala-vrikena neetah*. Krishna continues:

तत्त्ववित्तु महाबाहो गुणकर्मविभागयोः ।

गुणा गुणेषु वर्तन्त इति मत्वा न सज्जते ॥

Tatwavittu mahaabaaho gunakarmavibhaagayoh,

Gunaa guneshu vartanta iti matvaa na sajjate.

A *tatvavit* or *tatvajnani* is one who knows that the non-changing principle underlying the changing phenomena of the external world and the principle underlying the changing phenomena of his body, mind and intellect are one and the same. A *tatvajnani* having come to know that there is such a non-changing principle in himself, must leave the ever-changing realms of body, mind and intellect and remain aloof in the inner personality. He knows that the *gunas* operate in the body-mind-intellect realm and that he is beyond them; that they do not affect his real personality in the least. Having this detached attitude, he is not bound by the actions of his body, mind and intellect. He, in the course of his dealings in the world, may have to display all sorts of emotions and reactions. He may even have to fight with people. But in all this, though he puts on a mask of anger, inwardly he is serene. Even when he is acting, he stands apart and looks at his own actions as ordinary people look at

others' actions. It is possible for you to develop this attitude and frame of mind. In *karma yoga* you cultivate *samabhava* and do not let the world react on you. But when you develop *sakshi bhava*, there is no question of the world reacting on you at all, because you are entirely away from the realm of the body, mind and intellect where the world can react. You are just observing, not taking part in the worldly dealings of the body, mind and intellect. What happens if you are not able to keep yourself apart?

प्रकृतेर्गुणसंमूढाः सज्जन्ते गुणकर्मसु ।

तानकृत्स्नविदो मन्दान्कृत्स्नविन्न विचालयेत् ॥

Prakritergunasammoodhaāh sajjante gunakarmasu,

Taanakritsnavido mandaan kritsnavinna vichaalayet.

People who are not able to disassociate their true personalities from the body, mind and intellect realm and to stand apart and witness their own actions, become attached to their actions which are actually born out of their *gunas*. Thus they get caught up by *sukha* and *dukkha* resulting from the success or failure of their actions.

Kritsnavid is one who knows all the secrets concerning the perceiver and the perceived, *drik* and *drisya*, who knows that his body, mind and intellect are as objective to him as the world. The *kritsnavid* knowing this and acting like a true *karma yogi*, should not upset or unsettle the others who are foolish, *mandan* (Vedantic people of mediocre intellect), and do not possess the true knowledge. In an earlier stanza Krishna has said:

न बुद्धिभेदं जनयेदज्ञानां कर्मसङ्गिनाम् ।

जोषयेत्सर्वकर्माणि विद्वान्युक्तः समाचरन् ॥

*Na buddhibhedam janayedajnaanaam karmasanginaam,
Joshayetsarvakarmaani vidvaanyuktah samaacharan.*

A man of true wisdom must teach others the same method by which he himself evolved. He must teach others: "You will suffer if you are not able to view the world and your body, mind and intellect objectively. If you are not able to stand apart as an unaffected perceiver when you are troubled, don't say that the world is bad, your wife is bad, your circumstances are hopeless, etc. and try to run away from the present set of circumstances to another. Whether you are here or elsewhere, you are going to remain in the world only and it will react on you. The world is not bad. It is only your misconceived association with the world that is really bad. Disassociate yourself from the world and your own body, mind and intellect." Thus a *kritsnavid* (one knowing all about true life) does not run away from the physical world but runs away from the body, mind and intellect realm and stands as a witness to the emanations (actions that take place) from the body, mind and intellect. Those who do not know that *gunas* act in the body, mind and intellect (and that the body, mind and intellect are mere puppets in the hands of the *gunas*), associate themselves with the *gunas* and the actions emanating from them. They are by themselves neither intelligent nor mature enough to learn a lesson from the world. Unless someone shows them the way to ascend above their own body, mind and intellect realm, they cannot evolve. Yama says to Nachiketa in the Kathopanishad:

अनन्यप्रोक्ते गतिरत्र नास्ति ॥

Ananyaprokte gativatra naasti.

“Unless a man who knows Vedanta intellectually and by actual realisation comes and explains it to the people of inferior intellect, they, who are sunk in the worldly life, will not understand it and evolve. They cannot know the truth by themselves.” So a *kritsnavid* should properly guide such ignorant people in the right path. He must not tell them: “The world is bad. You are bad. You are governed by your *prarabdha karma*. It is a hopeless life. You can never be happy here. Run away”, but he must tell them: “There is nothing wrong with yourself or with the world. The only ugliness lies in your excessive attachment to the world. Leave off that attachment and be a *sakshi* (witness) to everything in the outside world as well as to anything that emanates out of your body, mind and intellect. Work as a *karma yogi* and cultivate *samabhava*.” Thus he must show them the correct path.

Krishna says:

मयि सर्वाणि कर्माणि संन्यस्याध्यात्मचेतसा ।

निराशीर्निर्ममो भूत्वा युध्यस्व विगतज्वरः ॥

Mayi sarvaani karmaani sannyasyaadhyaatmachetasaa,

Niraaseernirmamo bhootvaa yudhyasva vigatajvarah.

“By your *adhyatmik* understanding (knowledge of Self, with mind centred on the Self) you do *sannyasa* of all your *karmas* (actions) in Me (your own Self), i. e. renounce all your actions in Me, with your mind centered on the Self and your *buddhi* reinforced by the correct knowledge of the Self.” The *sannyasa* as propounded by Krishna is not *kashaya sannyasa*, or leaving society physically, wearing saffron robes. But *sannyasa* here is *karma*

phala tyaga or *sarva sankalpa sannyasa*, i. e. renouncing the fruits of action and attachment to the fruits of action. Krishna says in a later chapter:

यस्तु कर्मफलत्यागी स त्यागीत्यभिधीयते ।

Yastu karmaphalatyaagee sa tyaaageetyabhidheeyate.

He alone is a *tyagi* (one who has renounced) who is able to disassociate himself from the effect (or result) of his actions. He should not depend on the result of his actions for getting *sukha*. Thus *sannyasa* and *karma yoga* are in essence the same. Both imply knowing Vedanta properly and with Vedantic vision, disassociating oneself completely from *sukha* and *dukkha* arising out of the contact of our body, mind and intellect with the world.

Therefore, Krishna says 'renounce all your actions in Me', the Infinite Self. Then, how is one to act in the world? *Niraaseernirmamo bhootvaa yudhyasva vigatajvarah*. Be a *nirasee*, without desire. *Asa* or desire will lead to regret and sorrow, sooner or later. Do not think you can have permanent *sukha* from the world. Do not give way to desire and suffer the consequences. Be a *nirasee*, without desire. *Nirmamah*—without the sense of 'I' and 'mine'. Because of egotism we think: "This is mine, that is mine, I did this, I did that", etc. When you identify yourself with the inner perceiver, you will have no more the *mama* (my and mine) attitude. Work thus without egotism, identifying yourself with your real personality. *Yudhyasva vigatajvarah*. Fight (carry on your work in the world) without *jvara*. *Jvara* is the fever we suffer from, when we associate ourselves with the body, mind and intellect and think that joy can be had from the external world. In anything we do, we are anxious about the result and this

association of ourselves with the result is to be abandoned, or else the quality of work we do will suffer. With Vedantic knowledge cure yourself of this *jvara* (fever) and work on without being pulled down by it. However well and elaborately you do *karma kanda* rituals, it will not cure you of this *jvara*, born out of *ajnana*, *avidya*. Only proper *jnana*, knowledge, can cure it.

Be upright mentally, morally and intellectually and work on in the world as Krishna has instructed, *niraseer-nirmamo bhootvaa.....* The term *yudhyasva* (fight) refers to the battle of life—our day-to-day fight in the world. Life in the world can never be perfect. It is a relative life in which you come in contact with so many things over which you have no control. How can you have peace if you depend on the world? Turn within and reach the source of all *ananda*. If the world teaches you to turn within and become an introvert, the world and life would have served their purpose. For, turning within yourself, it does not matter where you are. The house is as good as or even better than any other place in the world for you to practise Vedantic *sadhana* and ultimately merge with the Inner Perceiver. Vedanta helps man to become perfect, a veritable God. Krishna continues:

येमे मतमिदं नित्यमनुतिष्ठन्ति मानवाः ।

श्रद्धावन्तोऽनसूयन्तो मुच्यन्ते तेऽपि कर्मभिः ॥

*Yeme matamidam nityamanutishthanti maanavaah,
Sraddhaavantonasooyanto muchyante tepi karmabhih.*

“Those people (*manavas*) who constantly practise this teaching of mine, throughout their life, who understand this principle, live with this principle and make every

action of theirs pregnant with this principle, who approach this truth with reverence and faith, with the aim of evolving and attaining *mukti*, who do not cavil at it but try to know it, understand it and act upon it, attain *mukti* without leaving their work. Their actions are no bondage to them.”

Here, the word *manavas* (people) is used very significantly. Krishna does not use the word denoting Brahmins, Kshatriyas, etc., nor even does he say ‘Hindus’. This *dharma*, given out by Krishna, is not for Brahmins alone, not for Kshatriyas, Vaisyas or Sudras alone, not even for Hindus alone. But it is a *manava dharma*—*dharma* for all human beings, whether he be a Hindu, Buddhist, Muslim, Christian, Zoroastrian or Jew and even for those who do not belong to any religion. If you are a man or a woman, (a human being,) this is the system for you, irrespective of caste, colour or creed. If you are not a Hindu, Vedanta does not ask you to change or leave your religion, because there is just one Infinite Principle. There cannot be two. Whatever name you give It, It is the thing which is to be understood by you in order to evolve. Vedanta does not contradict or condemn any religion; it includes and embraces in its fold all religions.

ये त्वेतदभ्यसूयन्तो नानुतिष्ठन्ति मे मतम् ।

सर्वज्ञानविमूढांस्तान्विद्धि नष्टानचेतसः ॥

Ye tvetadabhyasooyanto naanutishthanti me matam,

Sarvajnaanavimoodhaamstaan viddhi nashtaanachetasah.

What about those who do not heed Krishna’s advice? There are people who hear Vedanta but think that Vedanta is only to be read or heard but not to be practis-

ed in everyday life. They show an interest in Vedanta, but still cling to their own ritualistic religion and their old crooked selfish ways. Krishna says, such people who, in spite of Vedanta being presented to them and in spite of their having intelligence enough to understand it, refuse to know it and act upto it, are *ajnanis*, ignorant people, idiots. To know Vedanta, you do not need great intelligence. If you can discriminate between some dirty matter and food that are both kept in front of you and prefer to eat the food and throw away the dirty matter, then you have enough *viveka* (intelligence) to understand and practise Vedanta. In spite of knowing the richness of Vedanta, people who cavil at it, find fault with it, and try to hide behind lame excuses like "Everybody cannot act up to it, only one in a million can do it. Vedanta is only for reading and not for practising," are fools. Those who do not try to know it and even knowing it, do not act up to this wonderful technique are *sarvajnana vimoodhah*, fools in spite of all their knowledge *Vimoodhah* (*viseshena moodhah*) means, special first rate idiots. Such people Krishna says, are doomed for ever. The more they go after the shadow, the more they are getting away from the original. They perish chasing the shadow.

सदृशं चेष्टते स्वस्याः प्रकृतेर्ज्ञानवानपि ।

प्रकृतिं यान्ति भूतानि निग्रहः किं करिष्यति ॥

*Sadrisam cheshtate svasyaah prakriterjnaanavaanapi,
Prakritim yaanti bhootaani nigrahaah kim karishyati.*

Jnanavan is a theoretical Vedantin, who knows Vedanta, but does not practise it. Krishna says in a later chapter:

बहूनां जन्मनामन्ते ज्ञानवान्मां प्रपद्यते ।

वासुदेवः सर्वमिति स महात्मा सुदुर्लभः ॥

*Bahoonaam janmanaamante jnaanavaanmaam prapadyate,
Vaasudevah sarvamiti sa mahaatmaa sudurlabhah.*

After so many births one became a *jnanavan*, a theoretical Vedantin. After he practises it, he becomes a *jnani*. Right now, if you know Vedanta and practise it, you can become a *jnani* and attain *Mukti* in this very birth. You need not wait for a few more births.

So, a mere *jnanavan* though he knows Vedanta, is unable to transcend the three *gunas*, get rid of *raga* and *dwesha* and cultivate *samabhava*. He has no control over his senses. He is not able to leave the *gunas* and ascend above them. He acts under the dictates of his *gunas*. All living beings act according to their *svabhava*, *prakriti*, nature. Even a *jnanavan* is no exception to this rule. He, not knowing this, associates himself with his actions born out of *gunas*. He feels angry with himself and curses himself when his senses pull him out, and suppresses his impulses. The impulses will not die when suppressed, but will rise up with redoubled vigour sooner or later. What he should do is to disassociate himself from his *gunas*, view his own *gunas* expressing through his body, mind and intellect as a *sakshi* and try to sublimate his impulses by dwelling more and more on his true nature, the Pure Consciousness. If he does not do this, what is the use of merely suppressing his senses? Even trying to forget some unpleasantness, tragedy or sorrow in life is escapism, suppression. You must outlive the unpleasantness so that even when you remember them, they do not affect you.

इन्द्रियस्येन्द्रियस्यार्थे रागद्वेषौ व्यवस्थितौ ।
तयोर्न वशमागच्छेत्तौ ह्यस्य परिपन्थिनौ ॥

Indriyasyendriyasyaarthe raagadweshau vyavasthitau
Tayorna vasamaagachchhetau hyasya paripanthinau.

Know how to sublimate your impulses. Understand that *raga* and *dwesha* are two forces that are within us and not in the objects of the external world. What you should do is, not to allow *raga* and *dwesha* to act through the senses. To a *jnanavan*, the real hurdles are *raga* and *dwesha*. He should not come under their sway, but must go beyond them. They are the enemies he has to encounter on his *jnana marga*, spiritual cause.

Many people really want to evolve, but the pull of the senses and passions is so much that they fall below the standard they have set for themselves. After giving way to the passions or emotions, they begin to regret their actions. They feel *paschattapa*, regret on second thought, or introspection. When you feel such a *paschat-tapa* you can derive some benefit and learn a lesson from it.

उत्पन्नपश्चात्तापस्य बुद्धिर्भवति यादृशी ।
तादृशी यदि चेत् पूर्वं कस्य न स्यान्महोदयः ॥

Utpannapaschaattaapasya buddhirbhavati yaadrisee,
Taadrisee yadi chet poorvam kasya na syaanmahodayah.

When that introspection comes, when you feel, "O God! why did I do that? I did a mistake. I ought not to have done it", you are actually having something like *sakshi bhava* because you are viewing your own actions as

a witness. That is why you are able to stand apart, view your action and see whether it was right or wrong. Try to have this witnessing attitude throughout, without at the same time associating yourself with it. That part of *paschattapa* where you stand as a witness, must be prolonged and you must practise to be a witness of your actions, even when you are actually acting. But that aspect of *paschattapa*, where you feel sorry for your actions and regret and curse yourself, must be discontinued. You must cultivate *samabhava* there too. You must tell yourself: "All right, I (the body, mind and intellect) have acted in a foolish manner. This must be a lesson to me. But it is no use my feeling ashamed or sorry for it. I must transcend these feelings."

श्रेयान् स्वधर्मो विगुणः परधर्मात्स्वनुष्ठितात् ।

स्वधर्मे निधनं श्रेयः परधर्मो भयावहः ॥

Sreyaan svadharma vigunah

paradharmaatsvanushthitaat,

Svadharme nidhanam sreayah

paradharma bhayaavahah.

You may be doing something which is without *guna* (without merits) according to you. But recognise that whatever you do, your actions will never be perfect. Everything, every action, has *guna* (merit) as well as *dosha* (defect). You are eating food. It has *guna* as far as you are concerned because it nourishes you and you need it to maintain and sustain your body. But at the same time there may be a man somewhere who is dying of starvation at that very moment. Your eating the food contains this *dosha*, a sin, that while there is a man dying of hunger,

who might still be saved if you give him your food, you are eating it yourself. So even eating food contains *guna* as well as *dosha*. Any action has a bad and a good element in it. So you cannot do any action which is wholly good. That being so you must go beyond both of them. Do whatever work falls to your lot without the least bit of selfishness and without attachment to the fruit of the action. That work will be perfect, nay, has to be perfect. Since you are having the perfection, it will express itself spontaneously in your actions. You will be doing maximum good to the world. There will be badness in the world always. It is impossible if you are thinking of perfecting yourself only after the world has become absolutely perfect. The world or the society is nothing but individual 'I's' put together. Unless the individual 'I's' are made perfect, the society cannot become perfect. To make the individual 'I's' perfect, you must start by making yourself perfect first; then and then only can you make the other 'I's' and the society perfect. This is the reason why all the attempts by man to uplift the society or the nation by devising economic, social, political and other plans fail. You have to lift up a society or a nation not *en masse*, but by perfecting the individuals after first perfecting yourself.

Improve, right where you are and right now. We have relations with the outer world when we come in contact with the objects of the external world. If we try to get joy from them they must respond as we want them to respond. Otherwise we will feel disappointed. They must have the capacity to respond. Even if they have this capacity, the circumstances must be suitable for them to respond, which is often not the case. Thus there is

many a slip between the cup and the lip, and man faces disappointments and heartaches at every turn. Do not be conditioned by the world; let it not affect you. Outlive it even while living right in the midst of it. Do not be attached to anything in the world. Even when you are unattached, the things that are to come to you will come to you and even if you are attached, anything that is to go away from you, will certainly go away at the appointed time. It will not stay with you a second longer in spite of your attachment. So live in the world unattached and do the work that is yours as a *karma yogi*. Do not think you gain anything by leaving your work and running away from it, even if the work has no *guna* according to you. Even if you die in the process of acting as a *karma yogi*, in those very circumstances where you are placed, that is better for you than leaving those circumstances and going away to another. Do not think your job or family stands in your way. Do not think: "O! my job is useless. Vedanta and my job cannot go together. So I will retire and then practise Vedanta." When you do retire and go to the village, you will get caught up in the village politics and in petty feelings, and you will then feel: "My job and the hustle and bustle of Bombay were much better environments to practise Vedanta." A cow which is grazing on one bank of a river or stream will look at the other bank and think that the grass on the other bank is much greener, fresher and richer. When it goes to the other bank and looks back at the first bank it finds that the grass there looks much greener than the grass on the side where it is standing. It is just so with man also. He thinks he will be happier in another set of circumstances than where he is.

As examples of people who have attained *Mukti* by doing *karma yoga* as a first step, I have already cited the stories of Dharma Vyadha and Anasuya. Dharma Vyadha was a butcher, not that he liked his profession and took it up, but because the profession descended from his grandfather to father, from whom it came down to him. So he took it up. Though he was not educated, he had Vedantic understanding and an ardent thirst to attain *Mukti*. So he converted his very job of a butcher into *karma yoga* and gradually attained *Mukti*.

Anasuya also was uneducated. In the kitchen, doing her household work as a *karma yogi*, she attained *Mukti*. The *karma yoga* brought about *chittaparisuddhi*, which made her an *adhikari* for *jnana*. She did not leave her husband and children and run away to the jungles in order to have *Moksha*.

So, although your work is without *guna* in the social vision, it will be better for you to do it as a *karma yogi*, than to leave it and take up some other job even if that seems to have more *guna*, according to you.

Hearing all this Arjuna asks:

अथ केन प्रयुक्तोयं पापं चरति पूरुषः ।

अनिच्छन्नपि वाष्णेय बलादिव नियोजितः ॥

Atha kena prayuktoyam paapam charati poorushah,

Anichchhannapi vaarshneya balaadiva niyojitah.

“O Krishna, Vedanta is really so wonderful that people must know it. Even then why do they engage in misdeeds and work in such a way that it will bring about bondage? Compelled by what force, impelled by whom, do individuals in the world commit sin? *Papa* (sin) is

anything that will bring you misery, pain (*dukkha*), bondage. Even when a man does not want to do anything that will bring about *dukkha* and bondage to him, still on many occasions he acts in a way which is just the opposite of what he will like to do. What is the reason for it?

Arjuna's question is a very intelligent one. You are all coming here eagerly with attention to hear Vedanta, and most of you are eager to improve yourself. You will have no desire to do *papa*, sin. But, in spite of your wish and intention to do only that which is good for you, which will make you evolve, you may be falling far short of the ideal which you have set for yourself. You do wrong things as though somebody or something is enjoining, compelling you to do these things forcefully. What is that force?

You read the Bhagavad Gita; still you are not able to avoid anger, control your passions and the sense organs; you are not rid of attachment, jealousy, greed and envy. You know these are bad, yet you are not able to avoid them, why? Krishna answers:

काम एष क्रोध एष रजोगुणसमुद्भवः ।

महाशनो महापाप्मा विद्ध्येनमिह वैरिणम् ॥

Kaama esha krodha esha rajogunasamudbhavah

Mahaasano mahaapaapmaa viddhyenamihavairinam.

“The force that impels you to do wrong is *kama* (desire), it is *krodha* (anger). They are not different, not two, but one and the same. *Kama* when it is thwarted, when it finds an obstruction to its fulfilment, becomes anger. You give a piece of bone to a dog, it gnaws at it avariciously. Try to snatch it off, the dog becomes vicious,

it bears its teeth to bite you. This is *krodha*, anger, which is an expression of *kama* (desire), when it is obstructed. Desire itself changes into anger; anger is not born independently. Desire (and hence also anger) is born out of *rajoguna*. *Rajoguna* is the understanding: "I am the body, mind and intellect. The world is real. To get joy, I have to work in the world, move among the objects of that world." In that understanding we go on working, thinking that we will get so much of joy out of our actions. *Rajoguna* is the force that makes us extrovert and induces us to too much of physical actions. Our desire is born out of our extrovert tendency. It (desire) is such an avaricious eater that the more and more you feed it (fulfil your desires), it will ask for more and more. Desire is such that it will never be satisfied, however much you give way to it. Trying to satisfy yourself by accomplishing your desires is not the correct process, for you will never succeed in it. If one desire is satisfied, in its place thousand other desires sprout up. He who kills his desires alone is the king among men. He is even greater than a king as the following story illustrates:

When Akbar was ruling in Agra, there was a Muslim Fakir in a nearby forest. Some of the Muslim Fakirs or Sufi mystics were great *jnanis*. One day the Fakir was in the mosque offering his prayers. Next to him sat Akbar, who was praying: "O Allah, I have so many kingdoms but have not yet annexed Bengal. Give me soldiers, courage, strength, power and valour to conquer Bengal. After Bengal, I want to conquer Orissa." He was going on murmuring this and the Sufi heard it. The next day, Akbar, who had heard about the Sufi, went to the

forest to see him. He talked to the Sufi for a good while. Then he said: "I have learnt so much from talking with you and I am immensely impressed by your wisdom. I beg you to accept these offerings of mine and come to my palace. I will give you every possible comfort that you can think of." But the Sufi refused either to take the riches offered by Akbar or to go to the palace to live there. Akbar pleaded with him, but the Sufi was adamant in his refusal. Then Akbar asked him why he was refusing to comply with his wishes. The Sufi answered: "I do not want anything from a beggar." Akbar was enraged at this reply and shouted: "You call me, the great Emperor of Hindustan, a beggar!" The Sufi calmly said: "Yes because, last night I heard you in the mosque begging this and that of Allah. On the other hand, I am perfectly satisfied and contented. How can I, who need nothing to make me happy, take anything from a beggar, who has not enough to make himself happy?" This opened the eyes of Akbar, who realised what an abject slave of desire he was.

Like Akbar, we are also making our religion an institution for "private begging" from God. At least the ordinary beggars are honest and beg openly. We are dignified beggars. In order to make God respond, we flatter Him, offer Him this and that, bribe Him if He fulfils our desires, without knowing that the greatest *pooja* we can do to God is to live a perfect life, ethically and morally, according to *Sanatana Dharma*.

The enemy that stands between you and perfection is *kama* (desire), which expresses through the body, mind and intellect. With this desire present in us, whatever we do will not be perfectly done. Religion requires controlling

this desire. As long as these desires control us, we have no religion—what we have will at best be only a pretence of religion. Therefore, control your desires.

Krishna says in the second chapter of the Gita:

इन्द्रियाणां हि चरतां यन्मनोऽनुविधीयते ।

तदस्य हरति प्रज्ञां वायुर्नावमिवांभसि ॥

*Indriyaanaam hi charataam yanmanonuvidehyate,
Tadasya harati prajnaam vaayurnaavamivaambhasi.*

“The mind which goes after the wandering senses carries away the person’s discrimination as the wind carries away a boat on the water. So, O man of strength (Arjuna), that one alone will attain the *sthitaprajna* state in whom the *indriyas* are controlled and who can resist the mad onrush of the senses towards the sense-objects.”

The control should not be because one is unable to enjoy the sense objects. For example, a diabetic patient has some control—he will avoid sweet things. But that sort of control is useless. One should control the *indriyas* when they are running away to external objects.

In order to control our desire, we should know where it is seated and how it acts and pulls us down. Krishna explains these in the *sloka*:

धूमेनाव्रियते वह्निर्यथादर्शो मलेन च ।

यथोल्बेनावृतो गर्भस्तथा तेनेदमावृतम् ।

*Dhoomenaavriyate vahniryathaadarso malena cha,
Yatholbenaavrito garbhastathaa tenedamaavritam.*

Conquering *kama* is a bit difficult. The whole of the third chapter in the Gita from here is devoted to giving the method of conquering *kama*.

The soul within has three qualities:

(i) It is intelligent, sentient, not *jada* (inert). It is a conscious principle.

(ii) It is pure, untainted, unpolluted. Only something that is subject to change can be tainted, can get spoiled. But Pure Consciousness is not subject to change or decay.

(iii) The soul is self-illuminating as well as capable of illuminating other things. The body, mind and intellect can function only when illumined by the conscious principle within, the Soul. It is the intelligent principle within which radiates upon the body, mind and intellect as life energy.

If the intellect is expressing itself, it is only a projection of the Infinite Principle; if the mind is acting, the conscious principle of the mind is an emanation from That; if the senses have the capacity to express themselves and to perceive, the conscious principle in the senses is nothing but an emanation from that Infinite Principle.

Kama seated in the body, mind and intellect covers up this conscious, pure and all-illuminating Soul within, thus:

Kama is seated in the intellect as intellectual desires such as "I must write such a wonderful book that it will eclipse all other books. I must deliver such a wonderful speech that people should marvel at me". Thus, seated in the intellect, as intellectual desires and ambitions, it covers up the Soul, which is self-illuminating and capable of illuminating others like smoke covering the fire. (The fire also is self-illuminating and illuminating the

other things.) This is the subtlest form by which *kama* covers up the Soul. It also deludes the intellect and makes it turn towards the world and not towards the Soul.

Kama is seated in the mind as mental desires such as “I must see that my son receives very good education and my daughter is married to a very rich boy”. Thus seated in the mind (as desire for pleasure, enjoyment of worldly life), it covers up the pure, taintless, unpolluted Soul, as dirt covers up a pure, bright and untainted mirror. The dirt has come and settled superficially on the bright face of the mirror, but it looks as though the dirt is attached to the mirror.- It can be removed quite easily if you exert yourself a bit and wipe the mirror with a clean piece of cloth. So also the Soul is something that cannot be tainted, but the force of our mental emotions and desires covers it in such a way that we cannot see it through that gloom.

The grossest and the outermost expression of *kama* is in the *indriyas*. Here, *kama* covers up the conscious, sentient, all-knowing Principle within us by expressing itself as bodily desires and passions and the craving of the five senses. Thus sitting in the *indriyas*, it makes us desire, covet and pine for sensual pleasures. Man wants to enjoy good food, use fragrant soaps, indulge in sex pleasures, etc. The *indriyas*, when they start going out to the external world, drag the mind along with the intellect. *Kama* by itself has no force. It is inert. Yet, as placenta, an inert substance, *jada padartha*, covers up the sentient and conscious child, in the womb, so also *kama*, the inert substance, is covering up the sentient and the intelligent being, the real Inner Personality, the Soul.

These three illustrations are given to show that *kama*, desire, the one enemy of *sadhakas*, clouds and eclipses the three natural qualities of the soul. These are, (1) *chaitanya svabhava*, the nature of pure consciousness; (2) *svayam prakasa svabhava*, its capacity to reveal itself; and (3) *anyat prakasana svabhava*, its capacity to illuminate other things, i.e., the whole universe including our body, mind and intellect.

Thus *kama* seated in the body, mind and intellect covers up the soul in three ways—in a subtle way (in the intellect), in a less subtle way (in the mind) and in a gross way (in the senses). If we are to reach and see (not literally but allegorically) the pure, untainted, all-knowing, all-illuminating Soul, we have to drive away *kama* from those seats. All our actions must be directed to this removal, thus rooting out *kama* from the body, mind and intellect. That alone is true religion.

Knowing thus the seat of *kama*, we must now learn the easiest and the most effective way of rooting out *kama* from its hide-outs. Krishna describes the strength and the cunning nature of the enemy, viz *kama*, thus:

आवृतं ज्ञानमेतेन ज्ञानिनो नित्यवैरिणा ।

कामरूपेण कौन्तेय दुष्पूरेणानलेन च ॥

Aavritam jnaanametena jnaanino nityavairinaa,

Kaamaroopena Kaunteya dushpoorenaanalena cha.

A *jnanavan* (here by 'jnani' is meant a *jnanavan*—theoretical Vedantin who has yet to put into practice his theoretical knowledge i. e. a man who knows Vedanta but does not practise it), has a deadly enemy, *nityavairi*, in *kama*.

This enemy is so cunning that it can change its colours (mood), like a chameleon. It is a *mayavan* (magician); it can express itself in any way. One can never satisfy this enemy. The more and more you give way to it, the more and more does it demand of you. If you think you can pacify it, you will never succeed. It is so greedy that it will go on asking for more and more. It is like a forest fire, which will go on consuming the forest and will never abate. The more it consumes, the more intense will its thirst become.

Just think how true it is! Has anyone ever succeeded in completely satisfying one's desires? Do our desires not take different shapes (or colours) with the passing of each second? We may like a person today and hate him tomorrow. What we want today is different from what we wanted yesterday. When we are in the grip of a desire, we lose our discrimination and think that whatever we do is the right thing.

In the second chapter of the Gita, Krishna describes the nature of the enemy thus:

ध्यायतो विषयान्गुंसः सङ्गस्तेषूपजायते ।
 सङ्गात् सञ्जायते कामः कामात्क्रोधोऽभिजायते ॥
 क्रोधात्भवति सम्मोहः सम्मोहात्स्मृतिविभ्रमः ।
 स्मृतिभ्रंशात् बुद्धिनाशो बुद्धिनाशात् प्रणश्यति ॥

*Dhyaayato vishayaanpumsah sangasteshoopajaayate,
 Sangaat sanjaayate kaamah kaamaatkrodhobhijaayate.
 Krodhaatbhavati sammohah sammohaatsmritivibhramah,
 Smritibhramsaat buddhihaaso buddhinaasaat pranasyati.*

“Thinking of an object, attachment for it arises; from attachment desire is born; from desire arises anger; from anger comes delusion; from delusion, loss of memory of one's true nature; from loss of memory the destruction of discrimination; from destruction of discrimination one finally perishes.”

This is best illustrated from an incident in *Ramayana*. When Sita saw the golden deer, she asked Rama to get it for her. Rama said that the existence of a golden deer was an impossibility and that it must be a *rakshasa* (demon). First, Sita's eyes saw the deer. Her mind was then dragged, then the intellect also went after it, without caring to think about the reality of the deer. She started to argue with Rama: “I am lonely here. If I had been in Ayodhya, I would not have asked. I have nobody here to play with. You must therefore get the deer for me.” Rama went after the deer, and realising that it was a demon, killed it with an arrow. The *Rakshasa*, before he died, cried ‘O Sita! O Lakshmana!’ When Sita heard it, she thought Rama was in great danger and asked Lakshmana to go to the help of Rama. Lakshmana refused to go saying that Rama could never be vanquished and further it was not his voice. When her desire was not fulfilled, Sita got angry. When *kama* is obstructed, *krodha* arises. She said to Lakshmana: “I now know your true nature. You want Rama to die, so that you can have me. I will not allow you to touch me.” Sita knew fully well that what she said about Lakshmana was not correct, but blinded by anger, she thought what she was saying was right. *Kama* can never be satisfied. Like fire, it will go on consuming and ask for more and more. *Alam na asti iti analah*—something that never gets satisfied. You

think what you do is correct. Suppose you expect a promotion in the office. If somebody points out your mistakes at this time, you are angry and think that that person is your greatest enemy. You are deluded in the belief that all you do is perfect. When *kama* is there, whatever you do, you will not get *santi*, peace of mind. This evil force you have to conquer. This is what Vedanta says:

इन्द्रियाणि मनो बुद्धिरस्याधिष्ठानमुच्यते ।

एतैर्विमोहयत्येष ज्ञानमावृत्य देहिनम् ॥

Indriyaani mano buddhirasyaadhishthaanamuchyate,

Etairvimohayatyesha jnaanamaavritya dehinam.

Kama has three dwelling places—the *indriyas*, mind and intellect. Seated in these three places and enveloping *jnana*, it is deluding the individual. In old age, your clinging to delicious food and sex pleasure may go away. Although the desire to enjoy life through the senses may go away, the subtle desires in the mind and intellect will still remain. You may not enjoy much physically but you want to enjoy the emotion of your attachment to your children. This emotion you have developed because of your affection and attachment to the children and the desire that they should develop in the way you want them to. Don't give way to such desires. Put an end to them.

तस्मात् त्वं इन्द्रियाण्यादौ नियम्य भरतर्षभ ।

पाप्मानं प्रजहि ह्येनं ज्ञानविज्ञाननाशनम् ॥

Tasmaat tvam indriyaanyaadau niyamy Bharatarshabha,

Paapmaanam prajahi hyenam jnaanavijnaananaasanam.

The first step therefore is to control your *indriyas* and their onrush towards the external objects. You may

not take the name of God, you may not turn a *mala* (rosary), but if you are an ethical man with sufficient control over your sense organs, you have ample scope to attain *Moksha*. In this case *jnana* means the intellectual understanding that there is but one Reality, and that Reality is *Satchidananda swaroopa* and identifying with That alone will put an end to the cycle of births and deaths. *Vijnana* means actualising or realising or becoming one with *Satchidananda, Brahman*. *Kama* destroys both *jnana* and *vijnana*.

Krishna points out the way to control the *indriyas*, in the following *sloka*:

इन्द्रियाणि पराण्याहुरिन्द्रियेभ्यः परं मनः ।

मनसस्तु परा बुद्धिर्यो बुद्धेः परतस्तु सः ॥

*Indriyaani paraanyaahurindriyebhyah param manah,
Manasastu paraa buddhiryo buddheh paratastu sah.*

The senses are very strong. The mind being more subtle, flexible and adjustable, is stronger than the senses. Higher than the mind is the *buddhi*. The mind collects the impression from the senses. It then arranges, re-arranges and co-ordinates the sense perceptions and presents them as ideas. It is the *buddhi* which discriminates, analyses and decides that this is right or that is wrong and what ought to be done about it. It is the determining, discriminating faculty in us. Higher even than the *buddhi* is the Pure Consciousness, *Atman*.

When the *buddhi* associates itself with the mind, and the mind in turn associates with the senses, such a man goes down the bottomless abyss of self-degradation. Instead, let the *buddhi* associate itself with the *Atman*. Let

it take refuge in the Ultimate Reality. Let it analyse the world, let it analyse the Reality properly. Go on keenly thinking. Have *satsang*, read good Vedantic and scriptural texts. Shift them and understand what is the truth, the Reality and the best way to realise it and attain *jnana*, Peace and *ananda*. *Buddhi*, thus associated and engaged, will be strengthened and reinforced. With this strength it can conquer the mind, which in turn can conquer the senses. This is real religion.

Many people are interested in Vedanta and want to tread that path, but the greatest stumbling block for most of them is the pull of the senses, the pull of the flesh. Win over it and you will become a much stronger, much more powerful personality, even as far as the worldly life is concerned, let alone the spiritual life. If not, you will be just animals in the garb of human beings—*manushya-roopena mrigaascharanti*.

Sankara says:

ये हि वृत्तिं जहात्येनां ब्रह्माख्यां पावनीं पराम् ।
वृथैव ते तु जीवन्ति पशुभिश्च समाः नराः ॥

*Ye hi vrittim jahaatyenaam Brahmaakhyaam paavaneem paraam
Vrithaiva te tu jeevanti pasubhischa samaah naraah.*

“Those deluded people who disregard and discard this great purifying and uplifting mode of mental life, i. e., *Braahmi vritti*, live an utterly useless life. Their lot is the same as of animals.”

Man is endowed with *buddhi*, the discriminative capacity. Having intellect, knowing what is right and what is wrong, if man does not act rightly, can he be call-

ed a man? Those who, in spite of Vedanta being presented to them logically and rationally, cannot conceive of the Ultimate Reality and make no effort to understand it and those who, even though they understand it as the only thing that is capable of protecting them from drowning in the *samsara sagara* and leading them to the Infinite Peace, do not practise it, are no better than animals. Animals have not intelligence enough to seek the Ultimate Reality, but if man, having the intelligence, does not seek to realise It, he is worse than an animal.

एवं बुद्धेः परं बुद्ध्वा संस्तभ्यात्मानमात्मना ।

जहि शत्रुं महाबाहो कामरूपं दुरासदम् ॥

*Evam buddheh param buddhvaa samstabhyaatmaanamaatmanaa
Jahi satrum Mahaabaaho kaamaroopam duraasadam.*

Krishna concludes the discussion on *kama* thus: "So, O Arjuna, use your *buddhi* to know that Reality which is beyond *buddhi*. Thus reinforced, your *buddhi* can control the mind and the senses. Thus alone can you destroy the otherwise unconquerable enemy—desire. Here *atma* refers to the psycho-physical entity, body and mind, and *atmana* means 'by the intellect'.

In concluding the chapter on *karma yoga*, I would like to quote a beautiful *sloka* by Ramana Maharshi:

अहमपेतकं निजविभानकम् ।

महदिदं तपो रमणवागियम् ॥

*Ahamapetakam nijavibhaanakam,
Mahadidam tapo Ramanavaagiyam.*

“Separate from your true Self the ego, body and mind. Separate yourself from the lower aspects of the self and try to remain in the real Self. Try to know your true Self through such *vichara* and also *karma yoga*. These are not words of mere speculation, but they are born out of my (Ramana’s) own experience. It is the greatest *tapas* anybody can take to.”

Realise: “I am not the body, I am not the mind, I am the all-pervading Reality. I am the Inner Perceiver who is never affected by the onslaught of *sukha* and *dukkha*. Thus shift your values from the lower personality of ego, mind and body to the higher personality, the *Atman*.” This is the greatest, subtlest possible *tapas*, according to Ramana Maharshi. This is the royal highway to the Supreme. Arise, awake and know the Infinite Soul through conscious effort!

Chapter 11

ASHTAVAKRA GITA

King Janaka is a famous example of one who attained *Mukti* through *karma yoga*. His *guru* (spiritual teacher) was Sage Ashtavakra—so called because he had eight curves in his body. The legend has it that when Ashtavakra was in his mother's womb, he used to hear his father reciting the Vedas every day. Ashtavakra's father was a very devout and pious man but was not very learned and used to commit a lot of mistakes while reciting the Vedas. It is said that Ashtavakra was spiritually so mature that he used to squirm and twist in his mother's womb every time his father made a mistake, so much so that his body was twisted and full of curves when he was born. Since there were eight prominent curves, he was called Ashtavakra—man of eight curves.

The discourse between Ashtavakra and Janaka is called *Ashtavakra Gita*. In it the *guru* (Ashtavakra) advises the disciple (Janaka) about the way to achieve *Mukti*.

The *Ashtavakra Gita* is as old, if not older than the Bhagawad Gita. In it the Vedantic system of life and realisation is given in a most direct and simple way. The Bhagawad Gita, the *Ashtavakra Gita*, the *Mandukya Upanishad* and the *Yogavasishtha* are the cream of our *sanatana vedanta*.

The story goes that Ramakrishna Paramahansa used to keep the *Ashtavakra Gita* under his pillow and give it to his close disciples. He used to give it to Vivekananda. Naren (later known as Vivekananda) refused to read it, saying: "It is blasphemy. I will never believe I am God." Ramakrishna replied: "Naren, you need not read it for yourself, but read for my sake." As Naren went on reading, slowly he imbibed the spirit of Vedanta and later on developed into a staunch Vedantin. The *Ashtavakra Gita* opens with King Janaka asking Sage Ashtavakra:

कथं ज्ञानमवाप्नोति कथं मुक्तिर्भविष्यति ।

वैराग्यं च कथं प्राप्तमेतद् ब्रूहि मम प्रभो ॥ ९ ॥

Katham jnaanamavaapnoti katham muktirbhavishyati,

Vairaagyam cha katham praaptametad broohi mama prabho.

"How can I attain *Jnana*? How to attain *Mukti*? What is real *vairagya* and how to cultivate it? Please tell me all this, O Lord." To this Ashtavakra replies:

मुक्तिमिच्छसि चेत्तात विषयान् विषवत्यज ।

क्षमार्जवदयातोषसत्यं पीयूषवद्भज ॥ २ ॥

Muktimichchhasi chettaata vishayaan vishavattiyaja,

Kshamaarjavadayaatoshasatyam peeyooshavadbhaja.

"O child, if you have any desire for *Mukti* or *Moksha* throw away the *vishayas* (the tendency of the *indriyas* to go out towards the worldly objects) like poison. For, the more you satisfy your desires, the more new sprouts of desire come up." In the *Yogavasishtha* there is a *sloka*:

यदा यदा पाकमुपैति नूनं तदा तदेयं रतिमातनोति ।

जराभरानल्पनवप्रसूना विजर्जरा कायलता नराणाम् ॥

Yadaa yadaa paakamupaiti noonam

tadaa tadeyam ratimaatanoti,

Jaraabharaanalpanavaprasonaa

vijarjaraa kaayalataa naraanaam.

“The creeper called body, *kaayalataa*, is very peculiar. A creeper may decay at the bottom but still tiny new leaves will sprout up at the top. So also a man may grow old and decay. Yet inside him may be fresh offshoots of desires, with no physical strength to fulfil them. Thus physically weak and sinking, with a heavy heart, he becomes a target of Yama.”

Thus there is no end to our desires. Ashtavakra says: “Avoid the *vishayas* (objects of senses) as poison. But in Yogavasishtha Vasishtha says, the *vishayas* are much worse than even poison. He says:

विषं विषयवैषम्यं न विषं विषमुच्यते ।

जन्मान्तरघ्ना विषया एकदेहहरं विषम् ॥

Visham vishayavaishamyam na visham vishamuchyate,

Janmaantaraghnaa vishayaa ekadehaharam visham.

“Attachment to the objects of senses is worse than poison. According to philosophy, the material poison is not the real poison. Our foolishness in not understanding that sense gratification is the real poison; that is, our incapacity to recognise this and going on enjoying

the sense pleasures is the real poison. Why? Because only this body will perish if one takes (material) poison. But if you go on enjoying the *vishayas*, it will ruin not only this life but also the next. It will bind you in your next life also, for if you go on enjoying sense pleasures too much it will spoil your health and you will have a premature death. Not only that, when you die, your *vasanas* will be of such a strong sensuous nature, that you will be born in such circumstances, where you will have opportunity to fulfil your *vasanas*. Thus in your next life also you will be a *vishayaasakta* (a man going after sensual pleasures) and thus that life will be similarly spoilt. Throwing them away, then, what are you to cultivate? Ashtavakra says: "Accept *kshama*, *arjava*, *daya*, *tosha*, and *satyam*, like *amrita*. Cultivate these divine qualities."

(i) *Kshama* means the capacity to sustain all onslaughts of life with composure. It is *samabhava*.

When we start cultivating the good qualities and become ethically perfect, our extrovert tendencies will become arrested, we will turn back within ourselves and start deriving joy from within through *samabhava* or *kshama*. Whenever you are agitated, if you can stand apart without losing control of yourself, you will feel happy about it. If a man quarrels with you, you will feel happier in case you do not quarrel back with him. When you have *kshama* (or *samabhava*), when you are rid of *raga* and *dvesha*, then the world becomes a playground for you. You will bubble with joy and have love towards all. If someone harms, hurts or insults you, your attitude will be that of Jesus Christ, who prayed from the cross: "Oh! Father, forgive them for they know not what they

do.” No more cursing or finding fault with others. Instead, you will feel: “I was one of them (who wrong others) till yesterday. By God’s grace, I have transcended that state. Let them also transcend their *ajnana* (ignorance) which is the cause of their wrong action.” Thus you will pray for the good of even your erstwhile enemies.

When you cultivate *kshama*, you will be like a rock in the ocean of *samsara*. A rock will only be made smoother by the onslaught of the waves. So also you will become more and more perfect as the waves of the world (i. e. *sukha* and *dukkha*) come and strike you. You will be unaffected and unpo’luted though you remain right in the middle of the worldly life. The very *kshama* will give you directly the highest joy.

(ii) *Arjava* means straightforwardness and absence of duplicity, diplomacy and crookedness in thought, word and deed, always, at any cost.

We may lose anything, we may even perish and die for the sake of truth. We must not surrender to mere brute force and be dishonest. An honest man might have suffered throughout his life, yet at the time of death he will have the supreme satisfaction that he had not bartered away his honesty for the love of money or physical pleasures. Dishonest people may be materially prosperous but they will have no peace of mind before and at the time of death. Thus by honesty you derive the benefit of direct happiness within. This is great indeed.

(iii) *Daya* means kind-heartedness and charitable disposition.

An illustrative example of real charity is offering the food kept for you to a hungry man and not throwing him

a dry piece of 'roti'. You should do charity even if you have to suffer on account of it. By so doing, don't think you will be impoverished. To me Bhagavan's assurance of:

न हि कल्याणकृत्कश्चिद् दुर्गतिं तात गच्छति ॥

na hi kalyaanakrit kaschit durgatim taata gachchhati.

is as much as the theorem of Pythagoras is to you. It is as much mathematical truth as $2+2=4$. A man doing charity will never come to any harm. He will have ample dividends in the material as well as the spiritual world.

The more charitable you are, be sure you will have children who are veritable gods. The more crooked and selfish you are, understand, your children will be worse than you. They will be veritable devils. Thus when you cultivate these qualities, each of them will bring you direct joy, that is unchanging and undiminishing joy.

(iv) *Tosha* means contentment.

Man mistakenly thinks that contentment comes from amassing wealth, that it comes from the external objects. But it is not true. Contentment will have to come from within oneself. It is entirely independent of our external circumstances.

(v) *Satya* means honesty, truth. The Westerners and the Chinese who had come to India several hundred years ago have recorded how Indian people preferred death to uttering a falsehood. This was our culture. Yet what do we find today? We say we are *Sanatana Dharmis*. Are we having in our day to day life even a fraction of the essence contained in the Vedas and Puranas? My emphasis is on the essence and not on the chaff. It is upon the kernel and not upon the external shell.

The best way of cultivating honesty is to reduce our speech. In Bengali there is a word “Adda” which means “useless talk” carried on for hours in a group. A real Vedantin, even in a group, keeps up his individuality and divine personality. He does not allow his personality to dissolve in the group. This is one of the traits of a Vedantin. If one goes on talking excessively, vanity increases. You want to hide your defects and present to the outside world that you are a very big and wonderful man. So in order to cultivate the habit of speaking the truth, reduce your speech.

Vedanta does not say that the naked truth is to be uttered always:

सत्यं प्रियहितं च यत् सत्यं भूतहितं प्रोक्तम्॥

Satyam priyahitam cha yat, satyam bhootahitam proktam.

Only that truth which is supposed to bring good to the society should be uttered. Such truth is called *ritam*. Sometimes you will have to desist from uttering the literal truth, because uttering it may cause harm to someone or the other. Say, your child steals something. If you shout at him, “you are a thief and a rogue”, you are actually telling the literal truth. But, Vedanta says—“Do not utter such words even though it may be the truth”. Instead, point out the good qualities in your child and encourage him to develop the good traits. Tell him: “God is within you. He is seeing all your activities. So you should not do such things.” Point out to him the virtues of honesty. Thus you can remove the bad habit by developing the opposite good habit.

At other times we may even have to tell a lie, calculated to do good to others. There are many such lies in our *sastras* themselves. They are known as *arthavada*.

After prescribing the different *poojas* or *nama japas*, the books usually say: "If you do this you will get such and such a benefit." It is called *Phalasruti*. For example, in the *Lalita Ashtothara*, it is given at the end: "If you repeat these one hundred and eight names of Goddess Lalita, one hundred and eight times every Friday, you will become a *Kubera* (you will become immensely rich)." But do you think you will become a rich person if you repeat the names as instructed? Never in your life! Why is then such a lie given? It is given because generally man is of *rajasik* nature. He wants to amass more and more wealth. Since all his activities to that end never bring results upto his expectations, he seeks some easy method to make money. So when a book says, "if you repeat this *stotra* one hundred and eight times every Friday, you will become very rich" he takes to it immediately. He repeats it not only on Fridays but on every day at least ten times. How does he benefit by it? At least when he is repeating the *stotra* there won't be the onrush of so many thoughts in his mind. Gradually, in course of time, his mind attains at least some amount of concentration. Any benefit we derive from the *poojas* is not the benefit that is promised in the *phalasruti*, but the concentration that is brought about indirectly. But if you tell this truth, people of *rajoguna* and *tamoguna* will not take to it because, to them it means nothing. Unless you offer them some material bait they will not undertake to do anything. So, lies are uttered promising this and that, so that the *rajasik* and *tamasik* people may go God-

ward tempted by them. Though it is a lie, it is considered *ritam* because it aims at something good.

Ashtavakra, in the very opening lines, advises Janaka to throw away the *vishayas* like poison and take to the divine qualities of *kshama*, *arjava*, *daya*, *tosha* and *satyam* as to nectar. From this can be gauged the importance of developing these traits. Krishna says in the Bhagawad Gita:

दैवी संपद्विमोक्षाय निबन्धायासुरी मता ।

मा शुचः संपदं दैवीमभिजातोऽसि पाण्डव ॥

Daivee sampadvimokshaaya nibandhaayaasuree mataa,

Maa suchah sampadam daiveemabhijaatosi Paandava.

The only thing that will give *Moksha* is cultivation of divine qualities. If you have demoniacal qualities they will only bind you more and more.

Ashtavakra continues:

न पृथ्वी न जलं नाग्निर्न वायुर्यौर्न वा भवान् ।

एषां साक्षिणमात्मानं चिद्रूपं विद्धि मुक्तये ॥ ३ ॥

Na prithvee na jalam naagnirna vaayurdyaurna vaa bhavaan,

Eshaam sakshinamaatmaanam chidroopam viddhi muktaye.

“O Janaka, hitherto you were thinking you were the body made up of the five elements. No, you are not the earth, you are not the water, the fire, the air or the ether. Recognise that you are the *sakshi*, witness of the body, the mind and the intellect. You are the non-moving, non-changing, ever present witness. Only this recognition will give you *Mukti*. Know it.”

यदि देहं पृथक्कृत्य चित्ति विश्राम्य तिष्ठसि ।

अधुनैव सुखी शान्तो बन्धमुक्तो भविष्यसि ॥ ४ ॥

*Yadi deham prithakkritya chiti visraamya thishthasi,
Adhunaiva sukhee saanto bandhamukto bhavishyasi.*

“If you are able to separate your body from the true personality centre and view it objectively, right now, *adhunaiva*, right at this moment you can become a *sukhi*, happy man, *bandhamukta*, a man free from bondage. You can know what is the *ananda* right now. Take refuge in your true personality, the *bodha swaroopa*, the pure consciousness, the *sakshi* behind the body, mind and intellect and attain true *santi* (peace) right now.

The first thing in Vedanta is locating the *sakshi* (witness) within us. What is this *sakshi*?

I ask one of you, “What is your name?” You reply, “I am Mr. Raman.” “What are you?” “I am employed in the Government or some other office.” If I ask for further information you will say, “I am the son of so and so. I have a wife and four children. I live in such and such a place,” etc. In all these cases, the questioner is different from you and the answers you give are all marks, that distinguish you when you are in a crowd, i. e. among others. All the information pertains to the physical body.

Now, suppose you go home tonight, go to your room, shut the door, put off the light, sit down or lie down, and ask yourself: “Who am I? What am I? Am I Mr. Raman, employed in the Government, having a wife and four children? If not, who am I?” Here, the very questioner is yourself. “If I am the body, who is asking

this question? Who is this individuality, power, or something, who is asking these questions?" The question is thought in your mind, it is awareness, an idea in the mind. What is behind this thought? Awareness. In cinema houses, you see the name of the picture written on smoke glass (foamy) with light beams from within. Then you see the different letters distinctly separate. Each letter is different. These are just the expressions, the external marks. The light that shines through them all is the same, i. e. the real essence is the same. So also you may have so many different thoughts. But the content behind each thought is the same—pure awareness, knowing, understanding.

Just think: "Am I the body?" No. You are not, because at times you say, "my body". Unless the body were different from the "I", you cannot say, "my body". So also you refer to your mind and intellect as "my mind was depressed today; my intellect was dull;" etc. In these you imply that the real "you" is separate from your mind and intellect. That is why you are able to view them objectively. So reasoning, you come to the conclusion: "I am not the body. I am not the mind. I am not the intellect. Then what am I?" The "I" in you is the witness of the body, mind and intellect. It is the *sakshi* behind them all. It witnesses your waking state, the dream state and the sleeping state. Since you can remember your dreams, there must have been a witness who witnessed the dream. Because, what is remembrance? You recollect something that happened in the past. Unless there was someone who was witnessing the happening or event at the time of its happening, how can you know that the event took place? If you remember an event, it means

you were present as a witness at the time the event occurred. In deep sleep you are in a state of nothingness. Your body and mind are dead to the world. Yet when you wake up you are conscious that you slept soundly. You say: "I had a very sound sleep." How can you say, "I slept soundly" unless you were witnessing the sleeping? So there is a personality in us ever witnessing our waking, dreaming and deep sleep states.

This eternal witness is Pure Consciousness, awareness, *bodha swaroopa*. The nature of this awareness is: the body may change, the mind may change, but that which witnesses the body, mind and intellect never undergoes any change. In the world of constant changes, the one thing that never changes is the Inner Witness, the Pure Consciousness. If you want to have *non-changing, non-decaying ananda*, your approach must be through something that is itself *non-changing*. If you want to float on water you have to catch hold of something that will float. If you catch hold of something that will sink, you will also sink with it.

So also to attain the Supreme Reality, *Satchidananda*, you must make the approach through the Inner Witness, the *sakshi*, which is changeless.

When you go to a temple and say, feelingly, "O God!" what happens? You forget the outside world, your own body, mind and intellect. You are not asleep. There is a moment of intense joy, because at that moment you go very near to that witness. If going near the witness can give you so much joy, just think how much *ananda* you will have if you are seated in it, merged with it. When you go to temples do not be bound by the *bimba* (idol). Take Rama, Krishna and such names of Gods to be

synonyms of *Brahman*. Try to forget your little self and merge with the Infinite Self, the Witness in you. Thus sublimate your attachment to images and idols. Don't be tied down by them. Make them help you in your evolution.

I am saying all this: "Have *samabhava*, cultivate good qualities, locate the *sakshi*," etc., but you cannot cultivate them in a day or two. It requires a lot of *abhyasa* (practice). You have to put in so much of practice to learn even small things like cycling, typing, etc. Can you attain *Brahmajnana* without practice? If you fail at first, do not lose heart.

A child cannot learn to walk without falling down dozens of times. Yet it persists and succeeds.

अभ्यासाद्रमते यत्र दुःखान्तं च निगच्छति ॥

Abhyaasaadramate yatra dukkhaantam cha nigachchhati.

(Gita)

You can get *ananda*, joy, only through *abhyasa* (practice). You can transcend *sukha* and *dukkha* only through practice. Start sincere Vedantic *sadhana*, not because Poornananda says, not because the Vedantic books say, not because you will get worldly prosperity, but because IT IS THE RIGHT COURSE FOR YOU. Have the firm conviction that 'this is the only thing which will give me real *ananda*, *santi*.' Accept it as the very purpose of your life. The first thing is fixing your aim. Once you arrive at this decision, half of your *sadhana* is over. Whenever anything afflicts you, affects you, tell yourself: "Who is having this *sukha* and *dukkha*? The body and the mind. Am I the body? Am I the mind? No. I am neither of

these; so I am not affected. *Bodhoham*—I am the Inner Reality, the Pure *bodha* (consciousness)."

न त्वं विप्रादिको वर्णो नाश्रमी नाक्षगोचरः ।

असङ्गोऽसि निराकारो विश्वसाक्षी सुखी भव ॥ ५ ॥

*Na tvam vipraadiko varno naasramee naakshagocharah,
Asangosi niraakaaro visvasaakshee sukhee bhava.*

"You do not belong to any caste, creed or *asrama*. Caste, creed, etc., are the attributes of the body. "I am the body," is an idea in the mind. The mind is a projection of the Infinite Consciousness and you are that very Consciousness. You are not the one who is in *brahma-charya*, *garhastya*, *vanaprastha* or *sannyasa*. Can the *Atman* be a *sannyasin* at any time? Is there any time when the *Atman* is not a *sannyasin*? It is always unconnected, unpolluted, and untouched by any of the worldly things. When you identify yourself with that Infinite Soul, you do not get affected by external factors. Then how can you posit an *asrama*, caste or creed to the *Atman* which has none of these qualities? So shift your values and emphasis from the body, mind, to the inner perceiver, *sakshi*, which is not perceptible to the senses but which perceives the senses. You are unattached. Attachment pertains to the body and mind. When you recognise that you are all-pervading, what are you to be attached to? Attachment arises only when there is something objective to us, when there is something apart from us.

You have no form or *swaroopa*. You are the witness of the things taking place in the world. This realisation we have when we are sunk in *samadhi*. When you come

back to the relative mental level, what ought to be your attitude? You have to become a *sakshi* of all occurrences. In a cinema screen several things take place. They have that *tanmayatva*, making things appear as real. Yet you don't get attached to them! Similarly, in the screen or the canvas of the world, whatever happens, whatever be the projections, we must cultivate the *sakshi bhava*. If one adopts this attitude, whatever you do, you are unpolluted, you are untouched and unaffected.

There is a story which brings out this *bhava* very clearly. Rishi Vasishtha was living on the banks of river Narmada with his wife Arundhati. They had one hundred children. On the other bank, Sage Viswamitra was sunk in deep *tapas*. One day, Vasishtha called Arundhati and said: "Viswamitra is doing *ghora* (intense) *tapas* on the other bank. He will be completing his *tapas* tomorrow and as he had not his meals for a long time he will be very hungry. So prepare meals enough for six persons and take it to him tomorrow morning." The next day, Arundhati prepared a large quantity of food and went to the river bank. She found the river swollen and hence returned to her husband and told him: "I will not be able to take food to Viswamitra as the river is in spate." Vasishtha replied: "Pray to Mother Narmada to give way." Arundhati asked how she should pray. Vasishtha said: "Just say, 'O Mother Narmada, if my husband is a *nitya brahmachari* (one who observes celibacy throughout), please give me way'." Arundhati was astonished and asked: "How can you be a *nitya brahmachari*, when you have begotten a hundred children through me?" Vasishtha said: "You go and try this *mantra* and see whether the river gives way or not." Arundhati went to the

river bank and said: "O Mother Narmada, if my husband is a *nitya brahmachari*, give me way." The moment she said this, the river parted and a path lay open before her. She crossed the river and went to Viswamitra. The latter had just got up from his *tapas*, and so was feeling terribly hungry. He finished the huge meal, and Arundhati collected the utensils and went to the river bank. She found that the river had started flowing again and that it would be difficult to wade across the river. She thought to herself: "My husband gave me a method of coming here. Now let me try whether Viswamitra can save me." She returned to Viswamitra and said: "What am I to do, I cannot cross the river as it is in flood." Sage Viswamitra said: "Pray to the river that if Viswamitra is a *nitya upavasi* (a man who has fasted throughout his life), please give me way." Arundhati uttered as directed by Sage Viswamitra and the river once again gave her way. Greatly surprised at all this, she went to Vasishtha, and asked him how he could be a *nitya brahmachari* when he had a hundred children. Vasishtha replied that real *brahmacharya* was not total abstinence or celibacy, but constantly dwelling on the *sakshi*.

The way we lay emphasis on celibacy or abstinence has become an obsession with our modern youngsters. We should give only as much attention or care to sex as we give to talking, eating or any other function and not more. Extra emphasis will cause only repression in them. Instead turn them towards Vedanta *sadhana* and all the evils will quit.

Shift the emphasis from body and mind centre to the Soul Centre. Identify yourself with the perceiver within. Be the witness of the drama of the world, of the mind and

of the body. This should be the real attitude. All bad, useless qualities will automatically drop off if you have this attitude. If you get angry, analyse: "Who is getting angry? The mind is getting angry. Let the mind get angry. I am not the mind; *asangoham*—unattached am I."

When you have that *sakshi bhava*, the mind will get ashamed of doing bad things and slowly all bad traits will drop off.

I told you in my earlier lectures that you should cultivate *samabhava*. How to cultivate it? By outliving *sukha* and *dukkha*. How to outlive *sukha* and *dukkha*? There is a special technique. You identify with That—which never changes, never transforms, which has no mutations, which is the inner perceiver within; *sukha* and *dukkha* are two features of the mind. Reason thus: "Am I the mind? I am not the mind. Who am I then? I am the inner perceiver." The attributes of the mind and body will no more bind you. Spontaneous love and joy alone will be expressed through your body and mind.

The more you dwell upon it, the more you imagine, "I am the untainted, untouched, unpolluted *Brahman*", only goodness can come out of you. If I go on dinning into your ears, "you are a good man" understand, only goodness will come out of you. The more and more you practise, the more and more you will be progressing on this path. The more and more you do *nididhyasana* the more and more peace and *ananda* you will experience. It purifies, enlightens, and uplifts you.

धर्माधर्मौ सुखं दुःखं मानसानि न ते विभो ।

न कर्तासि न भोक्तासि मुक्त एवासि सर्वदा ॥ ६ ॥

*Dharmaadharmau sukham dukkham maanasaani na te vibho,
Na kartaasi na bhoktaasi mukta evaasi sarvadaa.*

“*Dharma* and *adharma*, *sukha* and *dukkha* are of the mind. You are beyond it. You are neither the doer nor the enjoyer. You are not the experiencer. You are always a *Mukta*. You were a *Mukta*, you are a *Mukta* and you will be a *Mukta*.

Ramana Maharshi says:

करोमि कर्मेति नरो विजानन्
बाध्यो भवेत् कर्मफलं च भोक्तुम् ।
विचारधूता हृदि कर्तृता चेत्
कर्मत्रयं नश्यति सैव मुक्तिः ॥

*Karomi karmeti naro vijaanan
Baadhyo bhavet karmaphalam cha bhoktum,
Vichaaradhootaa hridi kartritaa chet
Karmatrayam nasyati saiva muktih.*

“If you think you are the doer, you are identifying with the body and the mind, and you will be bound by the results thereof. By constant Vedantic introspection, the *kartritvabhava* in you is eliminated, washed off. If you outlive the *kartritvabhava* by leaving the realm of the body and mind, and identify yourself with the perceiver, *sakshi*, then *agami*, *sanchita*, and *prarabdha karmas* that pertained to your *abhimana*, when you were seated in the body and mental consciousness, die away. That is *Mukti*. As darkness is removed by light, similarly by proper *vichara*, remove the darkness, “I am the *karta* (doer), I am the *bhokta* (enjoyer)” and go to the chamber of light. *Mukti* is recognition of your illimitable nature, and living in it.”

एको द्रष्टासि सर्वस्य मुक्तप्रायोऽसि सर्वदा ।

अयमेव हि ते बन्धो द्रष्टारं पश्यसीतरम् ॥ ७ ॥

*Eko drashtaasi sarvasya muktapraayosi sarvadaa,
Ayameva hi te bandho drashtaaram pasyaseetaram.*

“You are the one perceiver of all and always you have been a *Mukta*. Because of wrong notion, you have identified yourself with the objects perceived.”

अहं कर्तेत्यहंमानमहाकृष्णाहिदंशितः ।

नाहं कर्तेति विश्वासामृतं पीत्वा सुखी भव ॥ ८ ॥

*Aham kartetyahammaanamahaakrishnaahidamsitah,
Naaham karteti visvaasaamritam peetvaa sukhee bhava.*

You have been bitten by a poisonous black cobra. This ego, *ahamkara*—cobra has bitten us and we are in a torpor, *moha*. Like a drunkard we are now living. Heedlessness is death according to Vedanta. “I am neither the doer nor the enjoyer”, is the *mantra* that will cure us. Drink this *amrita* and it will cure the poison.

एको विशुद्धबोधोहमिति निश्चयवह्निना ।

प्रज्वाल्याज्ञानगहनं वीतशोकः सुखी भव ॥ ९ ॥

*Eko visuddhabodhohamiti nischayavahninaa,
Prajvaalyaajnaanagahanam veetasokah sukhee bhava.*

“I am that Pure Consciousness, Awareness; with the fire of this knowledge, perception and conviction, burn the forest of *samsara* and *ajnana* and go beyond *dukkha*. Be in *ananda* thereby.”

यत्र विश्वमिदं भाति कल्पितं रज्जुसर्पवत् ।

आनन्दपरमानन्दः स बोधस्त्वं सुखं चर ॥ १० ॥

*Yatra viswamidam bhaati kalpitam rajjusarpavat,
Aanandaparamaanandah sa bodhastvam sukham chara.*

“In the darkness of night, a rope is mistaken for a snake. The rope was never a snake and will never be a snake, but because of our wrong understanding, we mistook it for a snake. Even so this universe has no real existence, as it appears. It is the Self, Pure Consciousness in which the universe is imagined to exist through ignorance. We are that dynamic, supreme *Satchidananda*—non-decaying, never perishing, never created, Pure Consciousness. The moment we remain there and look back upon the world, all dualistic feelings will disappear and we would remain as one with the highest reality.”

The moment you sink in the Infinite Spirit and look back, your understanding that you are born in the world, you will die in the world and that you are living in this world, will all appear as unreal, as you will ascend to your original, pure, and unchanging state.

मुक्ताभिमानी मुक्तो हि बद्धो बद्धाभिमान्यपि ।

किंवदन्तीह सत्येयं या मतिः सा गतिर्भवेत् ॥ ११ ॥

*Muktaabhimaanee mukto hi baddho baddhaabhimaanyapi,
Kimvadanteeha satyeyam yaa matirsaa gatirbhavet.*

This is an important *sloka*. There is a common saying: “As you think so you become.” If you think you are an idiot, you will be one. As your thoughts, so will you be. So Vedanta says: “Do not think you are an imbecile and idiot. Have courage, *pourusha*. Awaken

to that knowledge of the Supreme which is your heritage." If you think: "I am bound, *jnana* is not for me. I am a great sinner. How can I even aspire for *jnana*? It is only for good souls," etc., you will never attain *jnana*. If you think clearly and identify yourself with that *sat-chit-ananda* you will be a *Mukta*.

How one powerful thought force can work wonders is best illustrated by the life of Tiger Mahasaya, alias Tiger Baba. This is a true life story. Tiger Baba, as he came to be called later, was born in a zamindar family in Bengal, about hundred years ago. Seeing some wrestlers, a desire came in him that he should also become so powerful as to be able to kill even wild animals, including tigers, bare-handed. He started taking exercises, and this single thought occupied his mind day and night. He became powerful and used to go to the forests and fight with spotted tigers, bears, etc. In due course he was able to knock down Royal Bengal tigers in single combat. Once he was in the State of Cooch-Bihar. The Maharaja invited him and challenged him to fight one of his tigers. Tiger Baba accepted the challenge and won the fight, but as the tiger was a very ferocious one, he received a number of wounds and had to be in the hospital for about six months. When he was in the hospital swinging between life and death, a *sannyasin* visited him and told him: "You have been fighting tigers external to you. You are doing so because of your ego. Now, fight with the tigers inside you." From that moment Tiger Baba started his spiritual *sadhana* and in due course became a great *jnani*. He lived to a ripe old age, more than eighty years, and was greatly respected.

आत्मा साक्षी विभुः पूर्णः एको मुक्तश्चिदक्रियः ।

असङ्गो निःस्पृहः शान्तो भ्रमात् संसारवानिव ॥ १२ ॥

*Aatmaa saakshee vibhuh poornah eko muktaschidakriyah,
Asango nihsprihah saanto bhramaat samsaaravaaniva.*

The *Atman* is the witness, the Omnipresent, perfect, one, free, intelligent, actionless, unattached, desireless, and immutable *ananda*. Through our wrong understanding, ignorance, it appears as worldly just as we super-impose the qualities of a snake on a rope.

कूटस्थं बोधमद्वैतमात्मानं परिभावय ।

आभासोऽहं भ्रमं मुक्त्वा भावं बाह्यमथान्तरम् ॥ १३ ॥

Kootastham bodhamadvaita-

maatmaanam paribhaavaya,

Aabhaasoham bhramam muktvaa

bhaavam baahyamathaantaram.

“Meditate on the *Atman*, the non-moving witness, pure consciousness, one without a second, giving up the mental feelings (I am having *sukha*, I am having *dukkha* etc.) and the external feelings (this is mine, that is mine, etc., and also the feeling that I am the body).

देहाभिमानपाशेन चिरं बद्धोऽसि पुत्रक ।

बोधोऽहं ज्ञानखड्गेन तन्निकृत्य सुखी भव ॥ १४ ॥

Dehaabhimaanapaasena chiram baddhosi putraka,

Bodhoham jnaanakhadgena tannikritya sukhee bhava.

“O child, you have been bound for a very long time by the rope called *dehabhimana* (body consciousness). How to cut it and become free? Cut it by the wonderful *jnana* knife called *bodhoham*, pure awareness am I. Remember constantly that you are not the body or mind

that experiences *sukha* and *dukkha*, but the Pure Awareness, the *sakshi* that witnesses, without itself getting affected.”

The great *mantras* ‘*bodhoham, soham*’, (all of them mean I am that Infinite, Pure Consciousness, the Infinite Reality), were used for contemplation by our ancient *rishis*. Repeating mentally one of them, they dwelt on the *sakshi* within, constantly, and attained Realisation. You can transcend any *sukha* and *dukkha*, if you just close your eyes and say feelingly *bodhoham*, I am not affected. Try it and see.

निःसङ्गो निष्क्रियोऽसि त्वं स्वप्नकाशो निरञ्जनः ।

अयमेव हि ते बन्धः समाधिमनुतिष्ठसि ॥ १५ ॥

Nihsango nishkriyosi tvam svaprakaaso niranjanah,

Ayameva hi te bandhah samaadhimanutishthasi.

“You are unattached, actionless, self-effulgent and pure. Not knowing this, you indulge in various practices like *samadhi*, etc.” Such attempts presuppose the thought that we are bound, and so long as we continue to think we are bound freedom is impossible. *Jnana bhava, bodhoham bhava, satchidanandoham bhava*, is to be practised throughout the day.

त्वया व्याप्तमिदं विश्वं त्वयि प्रोतं यथार्थतः ।

शुद्धबुद्धस्वरूपस्त्वं मा गमः क्षुद्रचित्तताम् ॥ १६ ॥

Tvayaa vyaaptamidam visvam tvayi protam yatharthatah

Suddhabuddhasvaroopastvam maa gamah kshudrachittataam.

“You pervade this universe and the universe exists in you. You are the Pure Consciousness. Realise your true nature. Do not give way to weakness of the heart.

Come to the great wisdom by knowing you are not the body and you are not the mind.

निरपेक्षो निर्विकारो निर्भरः शीतलाशयः ।

अगाधबुद्धिरक्षुब्धो भव चिन्मात्रवासनः ॥ १७ ॥

Nirapeksho nirvikaaro nirbharah seetalaasayah,

Agaadhabuddhirakshubdho bhava chinmaatravaasanah.

“You are unconditioned, immutable, formless, beyond *sukha* and *dukkha*, of unfathomable intelligence, and unaffected by any external or internal phenomena. Recognise this and be attached to the Pure Consciousness.

साकारमनृतं विद्धि निराकारं तु निश्चलम् ।

एतत्तत्त्वोपदेशेन न पुनर्भवसम्भवः ॥ १८ ॥

Saakaaramanritam viddhi niraakaaram tu nischalam,

Etaitattvopadesena na punarbhavasambhavah.

“If you find anything with *nama* and *roopa* (name and form) understand it is unreal, false, as it will perish. Behind the name and form is the formless form, the never changing, never moving, never decaying *Satchidananda*. Take refuge in that if you want to escape rebirth.

यथैवादर्शमध्यस्थे रूपेऽन्तः परितस्तु सः ।

तथैवास्मिन् शरीरेऽन्तः परितः परमेश्वरः ॥ १९ ॥

Yathaivaadarsamadhyasthe roopentah paritastu sah,

Tathaivaasmin sareerentah paritah Parameswarah.

“You take a mirror and put it in front of you. You see your form there. The image in the mirror has no real existence. It is a mere appearance, for only the pure, colourless mirror exists, but when you look at the mirror,

you do not see the glass where your form is reflected. But in your form as well as outside it, is there anything except the colourless mirror? Similarly the body, mind, etc., have no real existence. It is only by being superimposed on the *Atman*, they appear to exist.

एकं सर्वगतं व्योम बहिरन्तर्यथा घटे ।

नित्यं निरन्तरं ब्रह्म सर्वभूतगणे तथा ॥ २० ॥

*Ekam sarvagatam vyoma bahirantaryathaa ghate,
Nityam nirantaram Brahma sarvabhootagane tathaa.*

“If space is enclosed by walls and doors, we call it a house. If the walls and doors are broken, only space is there. In an earthen pot a certain space is enclosed. If the pot is broken, only space is there. Just as space which is all pervading is given *nama* and *roopa*, the all pervasive *Brahman* exists in all things, although we may give various *namas* and *roopas* to it.”

You will, from the above *slokas*, observe how simple, yet forceful, forthright, unambiguous and clear, *Ashtavakra Gita* is. I am personally of the opinion that it must have been written prior to the *Bhagawad Gita*. It is, however, not popular because it deals with the subtle and higher side of Vedanta. It supports “*ajata vada*”—theory of non creation—as distinct from *maya vada*.

Chapter 12

M I N D

There are three steps prescribed by Vedanta for attaining *jnana* or Self Realisation. They are:

(i) *Sravana:*

Sravana is hearing Vedantic talks and reading good books on Vedanta. You have all been hearing this series of lectures and thus have ascended the first step towards Self Realisation.

(ii) *Manana:*

The second step is *manana*, where you cogitate, think over and analyse the things you have heard and convince yourself that Vedanta alone will lead to *jnana*. In this stage, you intellectually grasp the Truth but this alone will not lead you to Self-Realisation. You have to subjectively realise your oneness with the all-pervading, unchanging Reality; i. e. *Brahman*. For this, you have to ascend the third step, which is

(iii) *Nididhyasana:*

For actual realisation, *nididhyasana* or contemplative meditation, is the only process.

Many people have an interest in Vedanta, read and hear Vedanta. Consequently, they acquire a certain amount of equanimity and so are not much attracted to

the sense pleasures. This state of equanimity itself gives so much peace and joy to them that they become complacent and think that this is *jnana*. The ego in them, which associates with the body, mind and intellect and says "I have *jnana*," is not dead in them. It is the ego in them which poses as *jnana*. Many people get tied down like this in the *manana* process without actualising their theoretical knowledge by meditation. Some others want their *gunas* to give them *Brahma jnana*. They mistakenly think that without any exertion or effort on their part, they can have *jnana* by a mere touch or look of their *guru*. Ridden with inferiority complex, these cowards, without trying to know their real nature, want someone else to sell it second-hand. It is not possible, because, only something external to you can be given to you. This is something innate in you. You have to know it and experience it yourself. The *guru* can only show you the path. Krishna tells Arjuna after giving out the whole of Bhagawad Gita, *yatha ichchhasi tathaa kuru*—"I have told you the way but the knowing and realising—you have to do yourself, and so do as you please."

ईश्वरः सर्वभूतानां हृद्देशेऽर्जुन तिष्ठति ।

Easwarah sarvabhootaanaam hriddeserjuna tishthati.

"I am seated in the seat of consciousness in every human being. To realise, you have just to turn within."

In *Kaivalya Navaneetam* there is a *sloka*:

अज्ञानसंदेहविपर्ययास्ते बन्धाः चिराभ्यासवशात् प्रबोधम् ।

अन्येव नित्यं श्रुतिचिन्तनाभ्यां ध्यानेन चैतान् विलयं नयस्व ।

*Ajnaanasandehaviparyayaaste
 Bandhaah chiraabhyaasavasaat prabodham,
 Ghnantyeva nityam srutichintanaabhyaam
 Dhyaanena chaitaan vilayam nayasva.*

Ajnana is wrong knowledge. *Sandeha* is doubt. Many people read the texts and have all sorts of intellectual misgivings. "The texts say this. Is it correct? Is there any *jnana* as propounded in them? Can I have it? If I try to attain it, will I be alive then? If the ego and the mind die, who will experience the realisation?" Getting caught up in such doubts they never make any progress. A child who does not want to study will make all kinds of excuses for not studying. So also some people think of so many doubts behind which they can hide, simply because they do not want to take up the Vedantic life. *Viparita bhavana* is an attitude exactly opposite to what is intended. People of this sort try always to argue in a crooked way. Theirs is a negative way of thinking.

These (namely, *ajnana*, *sandeha* and *viparita bhavana*) are the three factors that hinder our progress towards *jnana*. We have accumulated such a stock of these traits in the course of so many births and it has such a tremendous force that it will try to circumvent, suppress, what little enlightenment and understanding we have from the study of good books, from Vedantic discourses and from *satsang* (association with good people and realised souls). What is the antidote to these hindrances (viz. ignorance, doubt and negative attitude)? It is:

“श्रुतिचिन्तनाभ्यां ध्यानेन च” ।

Sruti chintanaabhyaam dhyaanena cha.

Read good books, do *manana* (think over and analyse matters), associate with good people, serve and learn from realised souls (*jnanis*). When you go and see a *jnani*, do not do so with egotism but go with humility and receptivity. The calf goes to the cow with an idea of sucking milk and the cow, out of its love for the calf, gives out the milk. Does the calf ever approach the cow to kick and fight with it? We are like calves to the *jnanis* who are overflowing with love for the whole humanity and are eager to help by showing them the path of self realisation. So we must approach them with love and reverence, with a keen desire to learn from them and not with an idea of arguing with and criticising them.

Above all these, the thing that will once for all destroy all the three negative forces that hinder our progress, is meditation on consciousness or contemplative meditation —*nididhyasana*.

In *nididhayasana*, we have to use the mind alone as the instrument to meditate. So it is necessary that we understand the working process and nature of this instrument. In Vedanta the term to denote this instrument is *antahkarana* (which means 'the inner equipment'). This consists of the mind and intellect and the term used to denote the knowledge about the movements of this equipment is *vritti-jnana* or *vritti-bhava*.

Vritti-jnana is attained by analysing the mind and the world. Man generally thinks that the world is separate and apart from him and sees no direct relationship between it and his mind. But if you pause to think over it, you will realise that all the things you see in the external world are represented within you as so many thought

processes. What you see as the world outside, the movements and change in it, are the same as what you see inside as thoughts, which are movements on consciousness. The world outside and the corresponding thought inside are like the two sides of the same coin. If there is a man in front of me, the corresponding thought that 'that is a man' arises in my mind. Unless the 'man' thought gets registered, imprinted, *arudha*, in my mind, the man is not there for me. The mind acts purposively. It does not register each and every impulse it receives. For example, a woman, who has given birth to a baby, sleeps soundly in spite of the loud noises that may be going on around her. But the moment the new born infant starts whimpering even slightly, she wakes up. Her mind does purposive action in as much as it refuses to register even the loud noises outside, but the frail crying of the baby is registered by it. We are aware only of the things that the mind registers.

We perceive the world through the five senses. But even if the organs of senses are functioning properly, we cannot cognize the world unless the mind is functioning in that field. For example, you are absorbed in thought. A friend comes and stands in front of you. Your eyes see him but you are not aware of him. He may call you. The sound may fall in your ears, yet you are not aware of it. Why? Because it is the mind which registers the impulses received by the sense organs, arranges them in order and makes sense out of them. If it is engaged in other thoughts and is thus not associated with the sense organs to register their impulses, we are dead to the world, i. e. the world does not exist for us. In deep sleep also the mind is not available to the sense organs. That is

why even loud sounds do not awaken us as we are not aware of the sound. Thus none can perceive the world without the mind. So without the mind there is no world. I am not referring to your mind or my mind. You may say: "Swamiji, you may be asleep and for you the world may not be there (i. e. you may be dead to the world). But I am wide awake and for me the world is very much there." This is because you think you have one mind and I have another. But though we think in terms of 'my mind' and 'your mind', in truth there is but one mind. We are only conscious of a part of it and we call it, 'my mind'. When a hundred pots filled with water are kept in the sunlight, the Sun is reflected in each of them. Are we then to conclude that there are a hundred Suns, a Sun in each pot? If it were so, all the one hundred Suns should be present, when you collect the water in all the hundred pots in a large container. But this is not so. No. There is only one Sun which appears as many. Our saying "my mind" and "your mind" is just like the pots saying "my Sun" and "my Sun."

Thus mind being one, without mind there is no world. Mind is the conscious principle without which none perceives the world. Thus, though we in our ignorance take the world and the mind to be two different things, they are not so. Mind is a conscious process within and the world a material, external expression of that One Reality which is behind both the mind and the world. The world is purely mental (it is nothing but mind concretised) for it has no existence apart from the mind. The world you see outside and the 'world'-idea in your mind are concomitant, co-existent. Without the 'world'-idea is there any world for you? Analysing thus the mind and the

world, Vedanta says: "What you see outside as the world and what you see within as the corresponding thought, are one. The world is only an external manifestation or projection of the mind. Understand that the world has no existence apart from your mind. But there is something higher and subtler than both the world and the mind, from which both these have emanated, i. e. Pure *satta*, the Pure Consciousness, *Brahman*, the unchanging Reality."

In *Yogavasishtha*, Vasishtha says to Sri Rama:

पूर्व मनः समुदितं परमार्थतत्त्वात्
तेनाततं जगदिदं स्वविकल्पजालैः ।
शून्येन शून्यमपि तेन यथांबरेण
नीलत्वमुल्लसति चारुतराभिधानम् ॥

*Poorvam manah samuditam paramaarthatatvaat
Tenaatatam jagadidam svavikalpajalaih,
Soonyena soonyamapi tena yathaambarena,
Neelatvamullasati chaarutaraabhidhaanam.*

"Understand Rama, from That original and Ultimate Reality, *Satchidananda*, the first thing that sprouted was the mind. Out of that Infinite Consciousness, mind has come out, as the waves come out of the ocean. And just as the waves superficially cover the ocean and we are unable to see the depth of it, so also the mind, though it is a fractional projection of the Infinite Consciousness, superficially veils it."

Independent of the mind, the world is pure *Brahman*. When we perceive this pure *satta* or *Brahman* through the five senses it appears as the world, just as the colourless

rays of the Sun emerge as seven different colours when made to pass through a prism.

Thus the world is created through the *vikalpa* of the mind. In dreams our senses do not operate. Yet we have pleasure and pain, happy experiences and nightmares, just as realistic as we have in the waking state when our senses are operating. We see and feel as though events are taking place outside of us. But it is all woven by the mind and within our mind. From the dream state when you wake up, the dream seems absolutely an imagination having had validity but no reality. We know that it was unreal and we will not be affected by it. Similarly, for an ordinary man the world as he experiences in the waking state is very real. But to one who has realised and reached the *turiya* (Super-conscious) state, the world of the ordinary man seems unreal.

Man has always been intrigued by questions like, "Who or what created the world and how was it created? What is it that is supporting and sustaining this universe?" In trying to find out an answer to these questions, the Western scientists started by analysing the external universe and probing into the mysteries of nature in order to trace out its origin. Their analysis have led them to great and wonderful scientific discoveries and inventions but not to the Ultimate Truth. In contrast, the Eastern philosophers intuitively recognised that the external universe is but a projection of the mind. So, instead of tracing out the origin of the universe, they traced out the origin of the mind and succeeded in arriving at the Ultimate Truth.

So, to know the origin of the universe, you need not search outside. Instead turn within and conduct a re-

search to know the origin of the mind. Besides, if you search outside, there is an insurmountable difficulty. We cannot know anything of the external world beyond the sense realm. Even for scientific researches, what do the scientists do? They collect as much data as possible on a subject, then arrange and rearrange the facts within themselves (within their minds), think over it intensely and arrive at a conclusion. Then they experiment upon it and see whether their inference is right. So, even if you start a search outside, you will come to a stage where further search is to be conducted within yourself. That being the case, why not take the direct process of tracing out the origin of the mind without going out first and then retreating?

The Ultimate Reality is Pure Consciousness, pervading within and without, transcendental and immanent. To trace out the Ultimate Reality, that is non-changing, we have to go through a factor that is itself non-changing. If you want to float on water you have to catch hold of something that will itself float. Similarly our approach to the Ultimate Reality must be through some non-changing factor. This factor is the *aham bodha* the 'I' consciousness in us. This *bodha* (this 'I' consciousness or awareness) in us is a sample of the Pure Consciousness, the Ultimate Reality, *Satchidananda*. So, tracing out the Ultimate Reality comes to the same thing as tracing out the 'I' consciousness in us, which is but a sample of the former.

The next question is: "What is mind and what is its relationship to the 'I' consciousness in us?"

What is mind?

Mind is a flow of thoughts—unconnected, disunited and consecutive—one following another. And what are thoughts? Thoughts are sprouts upon the Pure Consciousness (on our inner consciousness) just as waves are sprouts upon the surface of the ocean. If you throw a stone in a pond, a number of circular waves will emanate. Similarly, on our inner 'I' consciousness wavy motions are produced. ('Wavy' is just an allegorical way of reference. Do not think that thoughts have a circular or any other shape.) It is these disturbances, waves, that are called thoughts. One thought remains in that sprouted or projected form for a certain length of time and then subsides in the very place from where it emanated. Then another thought follows. Thus, there is a continuous flow until sleep overtakes the mind. The moment the mind wakes up, the flow of thought starts and continues until we again go back to sleep. But though so many different thoughts may flow in the mind, the content of each thought is the same. It is just like the projection of a cinema film. The same light passes through the whole length of the film but we see different figures and movements on the screen, making up the scene. So also the content of each thought is Pure Consciousness, though we have different thoughts. We see different names and forms creating for us the *prapancha* play (the play of the world). Here, the simile of the cinema covers only a certain aspect of the truth, for, whereas in a cinema a certain *upadhi* (or means) is required to project a scene, viz. the film, here, in the case of our mind there is no such *upadhi*. There is no simile in the world which can completely and exactly explain the Infinite Reality. We cannot explain the Infinite in terms of the finite. Similes can explain only certain aspects of the Reality, giving us an

idea of what it is. The above simile has been used only to indicate that whatever the thoughts may be, the content of each thought is the same Pure Consciousness, Pure Awareness, *samvit*, *bodha* or *prajna*.

There may be different dolls made of clay—a tiger, a dog, an elephant, etc. But notwithstanding their names and forms the dolls are all clay and nothing but clay. The names and forms are superimposed. So also one moment we may have one thought, the next moment another and so on. But the difference between one thought and another is only superficial, the content being the same Pure Awareness.

The thoughts thus being a flow, a projection, there must be a substratum for it. In ordinary cases, say a river, the substratum (the bed of the river) is different from the thing that flows over it (water). But here, the substratum as well as the thing that flows or gets projected upon it are the same Pure Consciousness, just as the waves on the surface of the ocean. The content of each wave is sea-water and the substratum for it is also sea-water. If you understand that “whatever I sense in the world is but a movement of the consciousness, *bodha*, awareness, whether it be *sukha* or *dukkha* feeling or the understanding that this a man, this a dog, etc., it is but Pure Awareness which is its content”, then the world can be reduced into awareness, awareness and nothing but awareness. Seeing this Sawamiji is an awareness. Without this awareness there is no Swamiji for you. Hearing him is another awareness; otherwise, you cannot realise what he is talking.

There are two types of awareness:

- (i) Pure Awareness, that is the Ultimate Reality (and our true personality). This can be compared to the non-moving, still column of water at the bottom of the ocean.
- (ii) Broken pieces of awareness, (i. e. the thoughts) that sprout upon the Pure Awareness. This is like the waves which sprout upon the surface of the ocean.

Our true personality is Pure Awareness. But just as the waves of the ocean cover up their very source, i. e. the column of water underneath them, so also the thoughts that sprout upon the Pure Awareness cover up their very source. That is why we are not able to realise our true personality, true nature.

When we see the sprouting form of awareness alone, we mistake it to be the only reality. But true *jnana* is attained only if we go beyond the broken pieces of the sprouting part, the wavy side and sink beneath in the substratum. Then alone can you understand that it is all one Pure Consciousness. When you know that it is all one Pure Consciousness, you won't mistake the projecting part as something different from the substratum and have *dukkha* consequent on that misunderstanding. Seeing dolls of clay we may mistake them to be different animals. But once we know that it is all clay we would not be mistaking them again to be real animals. A small child takes a toy elephant to be real and may cry when its trunk is broken. But the mother will not cry, because she knows it is only clay and not a real elephant. We are in the child's stage now. Not knowing that our mind (which is a flow of thoughts, which in their turn are sprouts upon

Pure Consciousness) and the world (which is a product or projection of the mind) are but sprouts upon Pure Consciousness and hence are one and inseparable from it (as the waves are inseparable from the ocean), we take them to be real and suffer because of the vagaries of the mind and the world. When a wave identifies itself with the ocean, it can have neither *sukha* when it rises high above, nor *dukkha* when it falls down again to the original level of the ocean. Instead, if it takes itself to be an entity, separate and apart from the ocean, it has to suffer its varying fortunes. So also being aware only of the projected parts, i. e. the mind and the world, we superimpose names and forms on them and take them to be real by themselves.

We say: "my father, my mother, my wife and my children. They have come and they have gone," etc. But really, what has happened? So many bubbles or waves have come on the surface of the ocean of *Brahman* and have gone back into the same ocean from which they arose. Krishna says to Arjuna.

अव्यक्तादीनि भूतानि व्यक्तमध्यानि भारत ।

अव्यक्तनिधनान्येव तत्र का परिदेवना ॥

*Ayvaktaadeeni bhootaani yvaktamadhyaani Bhaarata,
Ayvaktanidhanaanyeva tatra kaa paridevanaa.*

O Arjuna, all the things in the world *chetana* or *jada* (sentient or insentient) have their origin in the thing that is imperceptible and unknowable (i.e. unknowable to the intellecting part of our *antahkarana*) i. e. the Pure Consciousness, Pure Existence. They have their end also in the same imperceptible Pure Consciousness. In between the beginning and end, they have got an intermediary

stage, when they have got a name and form, just like a doll made of clay. Originally, the clay has no name or form, and in the end when the doll is broken, then also it loses its name and form. In between these two stages there is one, where the clay acquires a name and form, as a tiger, a dog or an elephant, etc. In all these changes, is there anything happening to the substance, the real thing in it, viz. clay? To those who understand this, the intermediary stage will also be nothing but clay. That stage would not delude them.

But to a child, the intermediary part will be real as an elephant, a tiger, etc. Our understanding of the world is just like the child's understanding of the doll. We think: "This body is real. These names and forms are real. My father, mother, wife and children are real." Because of this incomplete, fractional understanding, we only take the intermediary, projected part of existence to be real. We suffer because one day, the projected part will cease to be. Anything that has come into existence will go out of existence, sooner or later. Knowing this (that the beginning and end of everything in this world is *avyakta*) we should try to know what the *avyakta* state of all these things is. Instead of doing that, we are always dabbling in the unreal intermediary projection, thinking it to be real and we consequently suffer. Vedanta says: "Look at the world, study it, analyse it and know that the world is only a projected part of the Reality and hence *nasvara* (perishable). That being so, if you attach yourself to the changing world, the *sukha* you will get out of it, will also be changing, broken. If you identify yourself with the non-changing Reality, the *ananda* you will get will be non-changing, permanent and lasting. To reach

the non-changing Reality, which is the origin of both the mind and the world, you need not go outside and search for it. Sink within yourself and trace the origin of the mind. Then you will not only know Ultimate Reality, but you will be verily "That." It is such a wonderful process that right from the level where we are, we can reach up to and attain the Infinite Reality. Not only do we have scriptural testimony and logical rational demonstration as to how we can realise the Ultimate Reality by tracing it within ourselves, but we have the testimony of so many realised souls, all of whom say: "Trace it within yourselves. You will be searching in vain, if you are seeking God outside of you."

Not trying to do this and realise for themselves, there are many who dabble with questions like "Who created the world? If there is *ananda* within ourselves why are we not finding it now?" Now hear me if you want to: A true Vedantin, like a true scientist, never asks the question "Who created the world?" Instead, he asks himself or others who know better that the world is perceived in front of him with its countless fleeting phenomena. "Now what is this world? Is it real? What is the true nature, true form, true reality of the world?" He does not make the foolish mistake of taking the world for granted at first sight. Do not waste your time that way. What do you know about the Ultimate Reality? How can you start asking such questions when your knowledge of the Reality is only a hypothesis for you? Realise the Ultimate Reality and see if you cannot solve these questions. When you get there, (when you attain Realisation) you will find that there is no *question to solve*, for, *the very question is dissolved*. For, from the level of the Ultimate

Reality, you will find that there is nought but That, that there is nothing to be explained. The world does not exist for you. From the Ultimate standpoint, such questions have no basis. When thus there is no question or problem, how can you solve it? A cause can be given only for something that is actually, really, abidingly existing. The world, as explained, has no real existence as world. So these questions are there only when you are in ignorance, *ajnana*. When you have *jnana* the questions have no existence. There is a dog made of stone. When you misunderstand it to be a real dog, you wonder whether it is a ferocious one, whether it will bite you. But the moment you understand that it is made of stone, that it is nought but stone, you laugh at your own fears and apprehensions, for the fear is baseless. The fear is not remedied, but it gets dissolved in the new knowledge. The misunderstanding that it is a dog can only be removed by the correct understanding that it is but stone.

So also our sorrows, fears and anxieties arise only by our misunderstanding that this changing, relative world is real. This is *avidya* or *maya*. This can be removed only by the correct understanding, obtained by a clean analysis of the world. This is called *jnana* or *vidya*. By making a clean analysis, know that the world which is of a changing nature is unreal. Do not waste your life by dabbling in the impermanent, intermediary stage of existence but shift your vision to the non-changing *avyakta*, the Pure Consciousness. Instead of going after the non-changing, imperishable, abiding *ananda* of *Jivanmukti*, *Satchidananda*, don't go after the objects of the world which will betray you. Don't go after the ghost, for it is not real. Don't go on a wild goose chase, for it will lead

you no-where. Don't go after your shadow, for you can never catch it. Change your sense of values, change your very way of life.

The question then arises: "How can the mind trace its own origin?"

The mind has two aspects. It can issue forth and project out into the external world. Here the mind deals with the external world and this is called the *pravritti* aspect of the mind. When you retreat within, you are away from that part of the mind which deals with the external world. This is called subjective thinking. Here you leave the gross aspect and come to the subtle aspect, which is nearest to the "I" consciousness, the true personality. This is called the *nivritti* aspect of the mind. The *pravritti* aspect leads you away from your true personality while the *nivritti* aspect takes you nearer and nearer to it. You blow air to kindle a fire, but you can also extinguish it by the same breath, i.e. the same breath is instrumental in kindling as well as extinguishing the fire. So also the same mind can lead you away as well as towards your true personality. Mind projecting out creates *sukha* and *dukkha* while mind withdrawn gives you *santi* and *samadhana* (peace and tranquillity). To trace out the origin of the mind and to realise your true self, you have to develop the *nivritti* aspect of your mind. You must train your mind to come away from indulging in the external world and to retreat within itself. The mind which is wholly extrovert must be trained to become wholly introvert. This can be done only by having mental purity and by cultivating *samabhava*; in short by being a *karma yogi* and contemplating regularly and sincerely.

Sankara says in *Aparokshanubhuti*:

अनेनैव प्रकारेण वृत्तिर्ब्रह्मात्मिका भवेत् ।

उदेति शुद्धचित्तानां वृत्तिज्ञानं ततः परम् ॥

Anenaiva prakaarena vrittirbrahmaatmikaa bhavet,

Udeti suddhachittaanaam vrittijnanam tatah param.

“For attaining *Brahmajnana*, it is essential that you must have a great element of mental purity which can be had by *vrittijnana* (i.e. by analysing the world and the mind and knowing their true nature).”

The preceeding discussion is one designed to bestow *vrittijnana*. Realising the impermanency of the world of objects, you should withdraw your mind away from it. Thus, when you become an introvert, your mind becomes free of *raga*, *dwesha* (attraction or attachment to and repulsion from the worldly objects), *kama*, *krodha* (desire and anger) and selfishness. That mind alone, which is free of these impurities, is pure. In a mind which is pure, there arises by constant practice of discrimination and contemplation, a state of awareness of *Brahman*. Such a mind which has destroyed the ignorance in you and brought you close to actual realisation, then vanishes itself. Then *Brahman* alone shines in all its glory. Ordinarily our mind with its flow of thoughts covers up the Pure Consciousness, like waves covering up the ocean. You can see the ocean underneath the waves only in the absence of waves. So also you can realise your true Self (Pure Consciousness) only when the mind which covers it is destroyed. Then what remains is Pure Consciousness, *Satchidananda*.

Sankara, in his *Brahma Sutra Bhashya* says that the preliminary requisites for *jnana sadhana* (efforts to attain *jnana*) are:

(1) *Nityanitya vastu viveka:*

i.e. the right knowledge (discrimination) as to what is permanent and what is impermanent in the universe.

(2) *Ihaamutra phala bhoga viraaga:*

Dispassion (absence of desire) towards enjoyments here and hereafter.

(3) *Samadamaadishatkasampatti:*

The six-fold accomplishments, which are:

- (i) *Sama*—control of the mind.
- (ii) *Dama*—control of the sense organs.
- (iii) *Uparati*—mind not dwelling on sense pleasures.
- (iv) *Titiksha*—Endurance of the pairs of opposites like heat and cold, pleasure and pain.
- (v) *Sraddha*—Faith in the advice of the *guru* (teacher) and in Vedanta.
- (vi) *Samadhana*—serenity and contentment.

(4) *Mumukshutva*—a burning yearning for liberation.

Mental purity and control of the mind and the sense organs have been repeatedly stressed in our *sastras* as the primary requisites of a true religious life. In *Manu Smriti* there is a *sloka*:

यमान् सेवेत सततं न नियमान् केवलानपि ।

यमान्पतत्यकुर्वाणो नियमान् केवलान् भजन् ॥

Yamaan seveta satatam na niyamaan kevalaanapi

Yamaanpatatyakurvaano niyamaan kevalaan bhajan.

Manu was the great law giver of ancient India. The whole of Hindu society was built up and based on his

laws, with its Do's and Don'ts and other directions. If we go according to Manu, we will all be great *jnanis*. But, unfortunately, the Hindu society has kept up only those parts which were easy to follow and has discarded during these ages the better and the ennobling parts. Thus keeping the chaff, we have thrown away the grain, the essence. Manu says: "O people, listen unto me. Take recourse to *yama* and *niyama* and not to *niyama* alone. If you take to *niyama* alone, without observing *yama*, you will go down the bottomless abyss of degradation and depravity."

What is *yama* and what is *niyama*? *Yama* and *niyama* are the two corner stones of the basement on which our spirituality is to be built up. *Yama* consists of:

Ahimsa, satya, asteya, aparigraha and *brahmacharya*.

(i) *Ahimsa*: A man is considered spiritual only when he practises *ahimsa*. He should not injure, hurt or harm others by thought, word or deed.

(ii) *Satya*: A spiritual man must live for the sake of truth. *Satya*, I have already explained, is *ritam* or *bhootahitam*, truth designed to do good to others.

(iii) *Asteya*: Non-covetousness. A black-marketeer, who makes exorbitant profits, is worse than a thief. He may build any number of temples, yet that has nothing to do with true spirituality. According to Manu he is totally irreligious and anti-spiritual.

(iv) *Aparigraha*: *parigraha* means getting things freely without working or exerting for them and *aparigraha* means not getting or receiving anything freely. According to Manu, accepting a *dana* (charity) is one of the worst sins. But nowadays we are making it a fashion to receive charity and presentations.

(v) *Brahmacharya* means self-restraint. It does not mean total abstinence in sex pleasure alone, but moderation in all our sense pleasures.

So the primary things in spiritual life are:

Be honest and truthful. Don't hurt others, don't talk or think ill of others. Never be covetous. Have a pure mind. Do not receive things freely without working for them. Do not be corrupt. Have self-restraint.

A man may be compelled by circumstances and, having no other way, may have to go against one or some of these principles. What really matters then is his inner attitude. A man in the army cannot stick to *ahimsa*. But his attitude must be of detachment. He must do his duty as a *karma yogi*.

So also the professional religious people have to receive *dana* in the course of their profession. A man may inherit the profession from his father and he may not be suited for any other profession. In order to support himself and his family, he has to take up the profession he is most suited for, even though it is not of the highest type. And in the course of his profession he has to accept *dana*, but if he is not mentally attached to it, he is not irreligious. If he engages in his profession as a *karma yogi*, he can march towards *Mukti*. But if he converts his profession into a sale of religion and exploits people in the name of God, he is a totally irreligious man, fast binding and ruining himself in spite of his pious pretensions. I am just wondering how many of the *pundits* and *purohits*, who are supposed to guide the common folk Godward, are truly religious. How many of them aim at attaining *Mukti*? The majority of them are as far

away from *Mukti* as any other ignorant worldly man is. In ancient times the *rishis* used to advise people according to their individual *pakvata* (maturity). To people of *satva guna* they used to teach Vedanta and the direct process of *jnana*. To people of *rajoguna* and *tamoguna* they used to prescribe rituals and the lesser things, so that they might evolve gradually. But nowadays religion has come to mean purely ritualism, irrespective of the spiritual maturity of a person. It has become a sort of business. If you spend so much, you will get so much of *punya*. If you do not spend so much, you will have so much *papa*. In those days, *Brahmopadesa* meant "the real process of initiation by which one could ascend to the *turiya*, *Brahma sakshatkara*." Now it has become a meaningless ritual in which neither of the parties knows what each is doing. It has degraded into a show and sale. For so much of *mantra*, so much of money you have to pay, and you will get so much of *punya*. Not that all the *pundits* and *purohits* are like this; I am only criticising those who make a business of religion. I am also pointing out that even they have a right for *Mukti*, if only they would sublimate their profession by adopting the *karma yoga* attitude. Let them be in their professions as *karma yogis*, without attachment. Let them have the attitude: "My aim is not money. What little I know, I will tell others. I will show them the way to do the things correctly and properly." Any work, any profession, contains something good as well as something bad. According to *smriti granthas*, anyone working in a European office is a *mlechcha* and ought to be considered a total outcaste from the Hindu religion, *jatibhrashta*. He is considered to have no hope for *Mukti*. So also anyone travelling by ship or any such conveyance to foreign countries becomes an

outcaste. Can we adhere to these rules now? Is it practicable? Vedanta comes to our aid here. It says: "Don't think you can go on doing only good things. Along with good will go bad also. So what you must do is to go beyond both. Have *samabhava* and work as *karma yogis*. Then the bad work will not affect you. Have detachment towards your actions."

The great Dharmavyadha was a butcher. Yet doing the job as a *karma yogi*, he purified and perfected himself and ascended the ladder of *jnana*.

So do not think: "The present life is useless. I cannot practise religion unless I have another set of circumstances." Not so. You can practise religion anywhere and everywhere. None is excluded from the ambit of Vedanta.

Ethical and moral perfection is the foundation of true religion and spirituality.

People who are sincere and outwardly religious are, in spite of their sincerity, not spiritual if they have no ethical excellence in them. People may be sincere, yet mistaken. There can be sincere delusions, sincere misconceptions and follies; but notwithstanding the sincerity, they are what they are—delusions, misconceptions and follies. So many people are apparently religious, doing *poojas*, *gayatri japa*, *sandhyavandana*, etc., but in spite of these they are not religious if they are not ethically perfect. So also many people are apparently irreligious, not caring for any of the observances, yet they may be deeply religious and spiritual because of their innate good nature, generosity, kindness, truthfulness and straightforwardness, in short, moral excellence. What is required

primarily in true religion is ethical perfection, discriminative knowledge and dispassion. True religion and spirituality are not different.

Religion must be the means by which we purify our mind. It is an evolution in consciousness, where we calculatingly, knowingly and understandingly transcend our lower nature and approach our true self, the Pure Consciousness. Religion in reality is not the mere observance of some rituals and performance of *yagas* and *yajnas*. It is not show and ostentation. It is what we are inside that determines whether we are truly religious and not what we show outside. Rituals were originally prescribed only to bring about an element of control of the mind and the senses in people of *rajoguna* and *tamoguna*. They serve no other purpose and have to be transcended when one starts aiming at *Mukti*.

I am repeating this, again and again, because blind ritualism has taken such strong roots in our society, that even after hearing these lectures, many of you are having doubts as to the correct meaning of religion. When the whole nation is weak, cowardly, corrupt and crooked, do you think if we pour ghee on fire and say “*swaha swaha*”, God will be pleased and shower his blessings on us? No. It may have had its use in those days when the social and national set-up was different. But now it is outmoded, outdated and of no use.

Instead, do “*swaha*” of your *kama* and *krodha* (desire and anger), *lobha* and *moha* (greed and delusion), in the fire of knowledge. Let your lower nature be burnt up completely by *jnana*. In the present day, any other type of *yajna* is a useless, a colossal show of mass hypocrisy or superstition,

The Gita says:

निर्मामोहा जितसंगदोषा
अध्यात्मनित्या विनिवृत्तकामाः ।
द्वैर्विमुक्ताः सुखदुःखसंज्ञैः
गच्छन्त्यमूढाः पदमव्ययं तत् ॥

*Nirmaanamohaa jitasangadoshaa
Adhyatmanityaa vinivrittakaamaah,
Dwandwairvimuktaah sukha-dukkhasamjnaih
Gachchhantyamoodhaah padamavyayam tat.*

Let our *ajnana* and *raga* (ignorance and attachment) go away. Let our attachment be to *Moksha*. Let our *kama*, *krodha* (desire and anger) *asa*, *pasa* (hope and clinging) go away. Do not be attached to *sukha* and *dukkha*. Those who know this secret are wise. Those who do not know this are *mudhah* (idiots, fools). Only the wise ones, knowing this secret and acting accordingly, reach the imperishable abode.

That Krishna, whom we worship, says this. Still we think we can buy a basket-load of *punya* by spending a lot of money in *pooja* without attaining inner purity.

Now what is *niyama*? It consists of *saucha*, *santosh*, *tapa*, *swadhyaya* and *Iswarapranidhana*.

Saucha is inner and outer purity. In religious performances, the first thing is to be pure inwardly and outwardly. Clean your teeth and take your bath early in the morning. Cleanliness is next to godliness. (Cleanliness includes both outer and inner cleanliness). Be pure of heart.

Santosha: Be contented always. Contentment does not depend on our external circumstances but comes from within.

Tapa: Either by word or deed or thought, do not hurt others. (This is the negative aspect of *tapa*. The positive aspect is, always try to utter truth and try to help others as much as possible. Serve others selflessly. Control the senses and the mind. Be disciplined in life.

Swadhyaya: Utter good words and names of God, read good books like the Gita, *Ramayana* etc. with meaning. Commit to memory important *slokas*, so that even in your leisure moments you may ponder over them. Have *satsang*. Cultivate the friendship of good souls. Talk of good things.

Iswarapranidhana: This will help your spiritual development. Surrender to God. Remember *Sarveswara* always. Dwell in Him.

How much of these things are we observing? If at all we perform anything, it is only the last, *Iswarapranidhana*; that too not with a pure heart but with *raga* and *dwesha*. Our cleanliness consists only in outwardly observing *achara*, without the corresponding inner purity.

So, nowadays we are not even aware of *yama*, let alone observing them. Of *niyama* we observe a part, that too, imperfectly. We do not aim at individual perfection and spiritual progress.

Shift your values first of all; cultivate *samabhava*, go beyond *sukha* and *dukkha*. Observe *yama* and *niyama* sincerely. Have a discriminative understanding as to what is permanent and what is impermanent. Know for

yourself the hollowness of the worldly life and detach yourself from its low values. Leave the realm of ignorance, *ajnana* or *avidya*. Fix your aim on *Mukti*. Make your mind pure. If you meditate regularly and sincerely with such a pure mind, it (the mind) will quieten soon. It will only be a matter of weeks or months before you merge in the Infinite Consciousness which is Pure Existence, Pure Knowledge, Pure Bliss—*sat-chit-ananda*. You will experience *jnana samadhi* or *chaitanya samadhi*. When you come back from the state of *jnana samadhi* to the ordinary level of consciousness, the questions which you now ask, like “Who created the world? Why is there so much misery and not *ananda*, which is our real nature? Why are people born and why do they die?”, would seem foolish and meaningless to you. From your stand-point then, there is no world of duality as it is all one Pure Consciousness. *Sukha* and *dukkha* are just two features of the mind, which itself is a manifestation of the Ultimate Reality. Births and deaths are just like bubbles appearing on the surface of the ocean and subsiding in that very ocean again. Is there any cause for rejoicing at the coming into existence or mourning at the going back of the bubbles into the ocean? Apart from the ocean, the bubbles have no existence. So also, beings have no existence apart from *Brahman*. They just seem to have an independent existence, temporarily and we take this passing phase of apparent existence as real, and consequent to this relative, incomplete and wrong understanding, we suffer. There may yet be another question: “Why should people be born at all?” or “Why should bubbles come up at all?” The answer (in the relative level) is that bubbles are produced in the ocean because it is the dynamism (capacity to express itself) of the ocean.

It is its very nature. So also it is the dynamism of *Brahman* that appears as creation. The creation has come out of *Brahman* and it will go back to its original abode of *Brahman*. So the cause of creation as well as the effect of creation is *Brahman* alone. There can be a cause and an effect only when the cause and effect are different. When the cause as well as the effect is the same, is there any cause or effect? The question of cause or effect does not rise at all. The "cause-effect" and "time-space" delusion vanishes there.

Yet another question that is commonly asked is: "Who created the world?" The answer, as you must now be knowing, is: "The mind created the world", for independent of the mind there is no world.

Some people raise the question: "How could the impersonal, formless *Brahman*, create out of itself such a curious phenomenon as the world?" The fallacy of the question will be apparent when you look at the sky or the sea. The sky is so blue, yet, if we go up and up thinking that we will reach a blue canopy, we will be mistaken because the blue colour does not really exist. It is an illusion. Our vision cannot go beyond and that creates an impression of blue colour. So if empty space can create out of its nothingness a blue colour, is it a wonder at all that *Parabrahman*, which is all in all, has the capacity to project the world, or the universe. We ask such questions only as long as we dabble in the relative level of *ajnana* (ignorance).

Ramana Maharshi says:

सत्यं मृषा वा चिदिदं जडं वा
दुःखं सुखं वेति मुधा विवादः ।

अदृष्टलोका निरहंप्रतीतिः

निष्ठाऽविकल्पा परमाऽखिलेष्टा ॥

*Satyam mrishaa vaa chididam jadam vaa
Dukkham sukham veti mudha vivaadah,
Adrishtalokaa nirahamprateetih
Nishthaavikalpaa paramaakhileshtaa.*

“Your analysis and argumentation as to whether the world is true or false, sentient or inert, whether the world is in the form of matter or energy, whether the world is *dukkha* or *sukha*, are all useless discussions. For everybody there is something universally pleasurable. A man shuts his eyes and says “O God!” He instinctively shuts his eyes, for he knows that when he opens them he will have only *dukkha*. In that brief moment he forgets himself and all else. His thoughts stop. There he finds much better joy than the petty joys he has in this world. That *nishtha* in which the world is not seen, in which the ego vanishes and in which the mind subsides is the most pleasurable for all in the world. The moment you know it, you will know the process of attaining *ananda*. Without knowing it, if you come to the outer circle, and go on arguing about the world and its origin, you are wasting your life. Our very pursuit in life is happiness, *ananda*, peace. Knowing intuitively that abiding peace, *ananda*, can be had only by shutting off the external world and retreating within, why do you not go there directly, instead of wasting your life in metaphysical discussions, as to what is this and what is that?”

Not knowing that the *kasturi* (musk) is within itself, the musk-deer, goes out in search of the source of the

fragrance and wandering here and there, falls a prey to the hunter. Similarly, not knowing that the seat of *ananda* is within ourselves, we go outside in search of it. We waste our whole lives searching for *ananda* outside and meet our death without accomplishing anything in the process.

Let us realise our folly and turn our minds inwards. Let us read Vedanta and hear such talks as these, reflect upon them and analyse them properly. This, followed by intense contemplation will take us to *jnana* right here. It is not a distant prospect. Ascend to that Infinite Glory right now. It is entirely upto you to accomplish it or mar it.

Jnana is there within you; only you have to remove the dirt covering it. It is not something that can be dropped from heaven by God. Even a hundred *gurus* cannot give it to you. They can just show you the way and you have to walk along with your own feet.

So, instead of dabbling in the deluding charms of the external world, turn your mind within. When the projection of the mind ceases, automatically the cloud of *ajnana*, otherwise called *samsara*, goes off. You will realise that what you had hitherto taken as reality is but a fractional expression of the dynamic aspect of that Supreme Reality. All your doubts will be removed. When clouds go away, you see the whole sky made resplendent by the Sun. The Sun was there before, but the clouds had covered it. So also when the *ajnana* cloud is removed, you realise the *Atman* shining in all its glory, purity, beauty and bliss.

I will now recite some beautiful *slokas* from Sankaracharya's *Upadesa Sahasri* in which he addresses the mind.

१. अहं ममेति त्वमनर्थमीहसे
 परार्थमिच्छन्ति तवान्यईहितम् ।
 न तेऽर्थबोधो न हि मेस्ति चार्थिता
 ततश्च युक्तः शम एव ते मनः ॥

*Aham mameti tvamanarthameehase
 Pararthamichchhanti tavaanya eehitam
 Na terthabodho na hi mesti chaarthitaa
 Tatascha yuktah sama eva te manah.*

२. यतो न चान्यः परमात् सनातनात्
 सदैव तृप्तोहमतो न मेर्थिता ।
 सदैव तृप्तश्च न कामये हितम्
 यतस्व चेतः प्रशमाय ते हितम् ॥

*Yato na chaanyah paramaat sanaatanaat
 Sadaiva triptohamato na merthitaa,
 Sadaiva triptascha na kaamaye hitam
 Yatasva chetah prasamaaya te hitam.*

“Oh mind, you are totally and absolutely useless. You go on thinking, ‘I, I, My, My.’ You are trying to cloud me. You are going after danger, the desire for external objects. If you go after a hundred objects, you get only one. As you do not get the balance, you get *dukkha*. I am not going to be a beggar like you, as I am always content. I am, therefore, advising you a simple remedy that will cure you of all your *dukkha*. You die, mind! I am part and parcel of the Infinite Consciousness.

I am not different from it. As I am not separate from it, I am always contented. I have nothing to get or avoid. If you do not want to be troubled, you better die. I am going to stand apart from you and laugh at your miseries. You try to settle down in *your seat* and then die off." This is the address of the *sakshi* (inner witness) to the mind. Don't you enjoy this?

Chapter 13

MEDITATION

Having ascended the first two steps leading to *Brahma-jnana* (viz: *sravana* and *manana*) we now come to the third and final step which alone will take us directly to realisation, viz: *nididhyasana* or contemplative meditation.

Vedantic realisation is a conscious process where you subjectively realise your oneness with the all-pervading Reality, Pure Consciousness; you realise your true Self which is *Brahman*. It is not a blind, mechanical process. So, you need to have a thorough and clear understanding of the technique or process involved in Self Realisation. For practising *Brahma vidya* what is required is a keen intellect, a clear understanding and a pure and discriminative mind. It is for thinking people and not for mediocre persons who refuse to think over and analyse matters for themselves. In *Yogavasishtha*, there is a *sloka*:

अज्ञस्यार्धप्रबुद्धस्य सर्वं ब्रह्मेति यो वदेत् ।

महानरकजालेषु स तेन विनियोजितः ॥

*Ajnasyaardhaprabuddhasya sarvam Brahmeti yo vadet,
Mahaanarakajaaleshu sa tena viniyojitah.*

“If you tell a half-awakened ignorant man that everything is verily *Brahman*, instead of leading him to *Moksha*, you will be sending him to ‘*naraka*’ (hell).” You

will only be confusing him. It (*Brahma vidya*) is so scientific and rational that it looks like mathematics. By argumentative analysis a rational conclusion is arrived at. Modern scientific discoveries have proved Vedanta to be right. Anybody, having a direct and clear approach is bound to understand it and if he follows his theoretical understanding with sincere practice (*sadhana*) he is sure to land in the Ultimate Truth, the Pure, Infinite Consciousness. You may go and search the whole world, throughout your life. I guarantee that you will not get a *tatva* (principle) that is in any way better or superior to that presented by Vedanta.

Vedanta says that spiritual evolution is a process in the consciousness—it is a process of the mind and not of physical manipulation or exertion. *Hatha yogis* start with the outer covering—the gross body. But a *jnani* knows that the body itself is a part of the mind. You may question this statement. “We teach the children that mind is within the body and most of us are still of that opinion. We equalise the mind with some nerve process.” Vedanta says: “The body is in the mind and not the mind in the body.” How? The body is a part of the world as we all can recognise. But the world itself is a part of the mind, for it has no existence apart from the mind. Therefore, the body is a part of the mind. The ‘body’ thought is one thought among umpteen thoughts that constitute the mind.

So, the body itself being just a part of the mind, the main thing in our personality is the mind. Mind has the capacity to bind you further in worldliness and misery, as well as to liberate you.

मन एव मनुष्याणां कारणं बन्धमोक्षयोः ।

बन्धाय विषयासक्तं मुक्तं निर्विषयं स्मृतम् ॥

*Mana eva manushyaanaam kaaranam bandhamokshayoh,
Bandhaaya vishayaasaktam muktam nirvishayam smritam.*

“The mind alone is the root cause of a man’s bondage (by causing births and deaths), as well as of his liberation, *Mukti*. If it associates with objects of the senses (objects of the external world), it will be bound. The moment you understand that the *vishayas*, sensory perceptions of the objects of the external world, cannot give you *santi* (peace), and start retreating within, you are on your way to become a *Mukta*.”

Let us now see how the mind can be moulded to work for Self Realisation.

What is the nature of the mind?

Mind is a flow of thoughts. One thought flows, then another comes, then another and so on. The flow is so quick, we do not comprehend it. What is thought? It is an emanation on Pure Awareness, Pure Consciousness; in short on the witness Self.

When I see a man, the thought that he is a man immediately rises in the mind. The man I see outside and the ‘man’ *bodha* (thought) in the mind are simultaneous. So the mind is a series of broken pieces of thought. Now, for us to be aware of anything we must be there to witness it. When we analyse the broken pieces of thought (that is our mind), go within and locate their origin, there must be one to do it as well as to witness the process. It is this that witnesses our waking, dreaming and deep sleep states. This is the abiding reality in us, upon which

sprout the mind and the body but which itself is untouched by them. It just witnesses them. Hair grows on the body and depends on the body for its very existence. Independent of the body the hair cannot grow. But the body is not affected by the presence or absence of the hair. Even if you cut the hair, the body is unaffected. Similarly the inner *sakshi* (witness) is not at all affected by the body or the mind, but the mind and body emanate from and are sustained by the *sakshi*, the Inner Perceiver, that is our true personality. Some of the different terms used in Vedanta to denote this indwelling personality are *kshetrajna* the knower of the field, *pratyagatma*, *antaryami*, *sakshi*, *Atma* etc.

Krishna says:

क्षेत्रज्ञ चापि मां विद्धि सर्वक्षेत्रेषु भारत ।

क्षेत्रक्षेत्रज्ञयोर्ज्ञानं यत्तज्ज्ञानं मतं मम ॥

*Kshetrajnam chaapi maam viddhi sarvakshetreshu Bhaarata,
Kshetrakshetrajnayorjnaanam yattatjnaanam matam mama.*

Know that I am the *kshetrajna* (knower of the field i.e. the inner perceiver) in every *kshetra* (i.e. the body). That *jnana* (knowledge) which makes you understand what is *kshetra* and what is *kshetrajna* alone is real knowledge, real understanding.

Ordinarily, people have knowledge of only the *kshetra*, mind and the gross body and are ignorant of the *kshetrajna*, the true personality within. According to Krishna, knowledge of one's true personality alone is real *jnana*. So, seek your true personality. Determine that you will find out who the real "I", the real perceiver within you, is.

Go to your room, shut the door, sit or lie down comfortably and ask yourself: "Who am I? Who is here?"

You will receive the answer from within yourself: "I am here." "Who is this 'I'?" "I am I." What is happening here? The questioning and the answering personalities are one and the same. This personality is something beyond your mind. If that personality were not there, your body and mind would be *jada*. When you ask yourself "Who am I?", you know there is something within you responding. That response and the preceding question, both have emanated from the *sakshi* in the form of thoughts. This, from which the thoughts have emanated, is actually your self. Having emanated, the thoughts stand apart from the *sakshi*. Please try to think over this calmly. It is a subtle process. Great will be your gain if you do so. Remember, self and *sakshi* are the same.

What is mind? It is a flow of thoughts and thoughts are nothing but emanations on the *sakshi*, witness within. So your very question which is also a thought, is an emanation from the *sakshi*, the true personality. Now try to leave the realm of thought and try to go to its origin. Sink within and try to reach the source of all thoughts. Just as you would dive into the water and go deep into it, reach the very bottom and pick something that lies there; so also dive deep within yourself and reach the true personality. It is easier said than done. You may not succeed very easily. It takes time. But even if you accomplish only a little, the *peace* you will get will be enormous.

Now the question is: "Can the mind locate the *sakshi*?" Yes, it can.

There are some glowing pieces of charcoal. To kindle a flame in them, you go on blowing air and the flame

rises up. Now to put out the fire, if you blow hard once or twice the flame will die. The blowing of air is instrumental in kindling the flame, as well as putting it out.

Similarly, the mind can act in two ways. It can sprout and come out (*pravritti* aspect) and it can also veer back, go within and kill itself (*nivritti* aspect). It can come out and express itself. It can also retreat, go to its origin and kill itself (die out). The *pravritti* aspect draws us out to the world. The *nivritti* aspect takes us back into ourselves. *Moksha* can be attained only through *nivritti marga*. Not issuing forth, the mind must come back and trace its own origin. Our minds are predominantly extrovert. It has to be trained to turn back and become introvert. For this, those factors which draw out the mind must be made weak and impotent.

The method adopted for this is the observance of the rules of conduct, such as controlling the senses (*indriya damana*), cultivating ethical and moral perfection developing *samabhava* and observing *yama* and *niyama* with sincerity.

When you cultivate these qualities, the mind slowly starts going within. Then by regular practice of contemplation, the realm of the mind is left and you go to the Self, Atman. The mind would have killed itself then. Independent of the mind, even the 'I' feeling, that is, the ego, will not be there. It will give place to the real Self, which remains glowing there in its full splendour.

People have a fear, "what sort of life will it be when the mind dies? Will it be any better than death?", not knowing that life, after the mind's death, is the only real life worth living. For, when the mind dies, you are no

more the ordinary mortal man, but an immortal superman. Only then will you realise your Real Self, the *Atman*. Try for it. The peace, joy and *ananda* of that experience cannot be described by words.

Many people ask me: “Even when the mind dies, will not the ego remain?”

There is a story. A boy was going to his father-in-law’s house for the first time. His father-in-law and a small group of relatives went to receive the son-in-law at the railway station. Knowing this, a rogue also joined this party. When the son-in-law arrived, the rogue also greeted him warmly and accompanied him to the father-in-law’s house. The father-in-law thought that he was the friend of the son-in-law and so extended to him his hospitality. The son-in-law thought that he was a relative of the father-in-law and so was very friendly with him. Thus the rogue had a nice time. After three or four days both the father-in-law and the son-in-law decided to learn the exact relationship the stranger had to the other and started murmuring to each other. The rogue sensed that his game was up and secretly left the house and disappeared.

The ego is similar to that rogue. The moment the mind turns within and tries to trace out the ego, the ego would have disappeared. The ego has no form. We have given it a name. It is just an expression of something that is existing, something that is conscious, the first outward expression of the *sakshi* or the Self.

Ramana Maharshi says:

अहमिनाशभाज्यहमहंतया
स्फुरति हृत् स्वयं परमपूर्णसत् ॥

Ahaminaasabhaajyahamahamtayaa

Sphurati hrit svayam paramapoornasat.

“When the ‘I’ (the ego) dies, there remains only the wonderful consciousness, that shines forth as the *parama poorna Satchidananda, Atman.*”

This process is subtle. But, the majority of people being gross, in order to bring about concentration in them, the techniques of *yoga siddhanta* and *hatha yoga* have been evolved by the *rishis*.

But those who are thoughtful enough, who have *viveka* and *vairagya*, (a clear discriminative understanding and dispassion), can locate the Atman (Self) by the direct process of *nididhyasana*, contemplative meditation or *anusandhana*. It is quite different from the various types of *dhyana* generally adopted by the people. What and where is the difference? The most popular form of *dhyana* (meditation) is fixing your mind on the form of your favourite deity and keeping it constantly there, i. e. you picture a symbol or create a form of the deity in your mind. This is a process of *pravrittimmarga*, in which the mind issues forth by imagining a form external to you. You go on meditating on this form, which is but a creation of the mind. As you go on meditating in this way, you reach a stage where the form you picture in the mind comes out clearly. Then you feel you have had a vision of God and feel happy. But when you come out of your meditation, you are again the old person, because you are still having *raga* and *dwesha* (attractions and repulsions), and *kama-krodha* (desire and anger) as before. You feel happy only when and so long as the mental image is clearly visualised and unhappy the rest of the time. So the peace of mind

and the joy you derive out of such meditation is as fleeting and short-lived as any worldly joy. To reach the Pure Consciousness, Atman, you have to transcend the mind and go beyond. How can you do this by fixing your mind on something which itself is a creation of the mind? Instead of going to the origin of the mind you are fixing yourself on a creation of the mind. Moreover, there would always be stress and strain in your mind in creating the picture of the deity.

Many people meditate on the sound *OM*. They think this sound is the universe, and do *upasana* (meditation) of it. When they go on meditating on it constantly, they reach a sort of supra-mental state, in which the onrush of thoughts stops for a while. But they are nowhere near *nirvikalpa samadhi*, the real conscious awakening. *Om* being actually a symbol of the Infinite Reality, by itself it cannot be *Brahman*. When we meditate on it we must be aware of the conscious principle behind it. Instead, if we go on meditating on the sound *OM*, thinking it to be *Brahman*, we are sadly mistaken. Can a sound ever become *Brahman*? There is a technique called *arundhati nyaya*. When you want to point out a particular star in the sky to another person, how will you do it? You go near a tree, point out a branch, which is somewhat in the direction of the star, and indicate the position of the star in relation to the branch. The branch is used to indicate the direction of the star. Similarly, a signpost pointing to the direction of Poona is itself not Poona. Instead of clinging on to the sign post, the traveller must go in the direction indicated by the sign post. So also the sound *OM*, the idols and images, are there to give us an idea or conception of God. When you see an image

of Rama or Krishna, it must create a thought in the mind about the Infinite Reality, the *Brahman*. Symbols and images are themselves not *Brahman*.

Transcend the *upasanas* and the dualistic *dhyana* and come to *Brahma vidya*, the highest contemplation.

In the Bhagawad Gita, meditation is dealt with briefly. Krishna gives out only three or four *slokas* on meditation. To people who are in the initial stages of development, he has given instructions as to how to sit, where to sit, etc. But to people who are developed intellectually and ethically, he gives just the one *sloka*:

आत्मसंस्थं मनः कृत्वा न किञ्चिदपि चिन्तयेत् ॥

Atmasamstham manah kritvaa na kinchidapi chintayet

“Bring your mind to the *Atman* and refuse to think.” This is all the instruction given. Who is to bring the mind to the *Atman*? How to bring the mind to the *Atman*? These are some of the questions that will crop up in our minds and confuse us.

A more detailed and exhaustive treatment of meditation is found in “*Aparokshanubhooti*” of Sankaracharya, where the last forty verses deal with meditation. Most of the *slokas* in it have been taken from *Tejo Bindu Upanishad*.

Sankara says: “Meditate on the Pure Consciousness” *Atman*. This is called contemplative meditation. How to do it?

Retire to your room, close the doors, burn some incense, sit or lie down in a comfortable posture. The posture must not create any physical discomfort or strain. Let your body and mind be relaxed. Close your eyes.

Chant mentally (not orally), with feeling, *soham* or *bodho-ham*. The chanting must not be done mechanically. It must be accompanied by a corresponding *bhavana* (feeling) in the mind. *Bodhoham* means "The Inner 'I' is Pure Consciousness", or "The Pure Consciousness is the very 'I' within." Pure Consciousness is the Atman.

Soham means "the Infinite Reality is the very 'I' or 'the Infinite Reality am I.'"

Ashtavakra Gita says:

यदि देहं पृथक्कृत्य चिति विश्राम्य तिष्ठसि ।

अधुनैव सुखी शान्तो भन्धमुक्तो भविष्यसि ॥

Yadi deham prithakkrittya chiti vishraamya tishthasi,

Adhunaiva sukhee saanto bandhamukto bhavishyasi.

"If you can separate your body from your true personality and view it objectively, if you can leave the realm of body and mind and take refuge in the Atman, the Pure Consciousness, right now you will have supreme *ananda*, peace and liberation from bondage."

Vedanta holds the possibility of a *sishya* (disciple) realising the Infinite Reality on even hearing his *guru* say once *tatvamasi* (That Reality Thou Art), if he is sufficiently *pakva* (spiritually mature). But practically we do not see this happen, because we are pinned down by a heavy load of *vasanas* and we require to do a lot of *sadhana* to remove it. It is not easy for us to separate ourselves from the body and mind and sink within. To enable us to do that, *nididhyasana* is the method recommended by the sages.

Even if we try to retreat within, it does not become so easy at first because, all these years our mind had been

extrovert. To make it retreat within, we must first of all be convinced of our true personality, the Pure Consciousness, intellectually, by hearing, studying and thinking about Vedanta. After being convinced of it, we must try to remember that Pure Consciousness constantly or as long as possible. How to remember it? Whenever you are usefully engaged, just chant within, mentally, with as much feeling as you can pour into it, *soham* or *bodhoham*. This you can do anywhere and everywhere, whenever you have time, even if it be for a minute. You can utilise even the time spent in the latrine to chant *bodhoham*. Remembering the Pure Consciousness whenever there is time is called *anusandhana*. This is an all-day-process. Training the mind thus, it becomes easier for you to make your mind one-pointed during the actual meditation, *nididhyasana*.

What happens exactly during meditation and how does it take you to Realisation?

The mind or the projected thoughts are things which emanated from the Pure Consciousness. Having emanated, they cover up the very Consciousness from which they have sprouted. The waves of the sea originate from the sea itself. But having originated, they cover up the very source, i. e. the sea. We are able to see only the waves and not the sea, the column of water beneath.

So also the thoughts that flow in the mind obstruct our vision beyond the mind, to the Atman. Vision does not mean the physical sight, because the Atman is not something that can be perceived by our senses. Thus the mind, with its flow of thoughts, hides the inner Atman. To remove this obstruction, killing the very mind

that obstructs is the Vedantic process of realisation. This process ends in *manonasa* (destruction of the mind).

How to kill the mind? As we have seen, the mind is a flow of thoughts. Disunited, unconnected thoughts flow in a rapid sequence and this flow is called mind. Without there being a flow of thoughts, the mind is not there. As the flow is the very integral nature of the mind and since, when you remove the integral nature of a thing, it ceases to be that thing, in the case of the mind, when you stop the flow of thoughts the mind ceases to exist. When we sleep, the flow of thoughts and consequently the mind are not there. But then, we are in a state of complete unconsciousness and ignorance, and we cannot have the realisation of Pure Consciousness, Atman, in a state that is the very negation of consciousness. So, in order to kill the mind, you have to arrest the flow of thoughts and the arresting has to be done in such a way that you do not slip unconsciously into sleep. Thus when you stop the flow of thoughts, at the same time keeping up full awareness, you directly ascend to the state of Pure Consciousness; you are the Pure *Satchidananda* then.

The next question is: "How to stop the thoughts?" First, in the place of a series of unconnected, disunited thoughts, substitute the one thought *bodhoham* or *soham*. Start meditation, as already instructed, and go on mentally chanting *bodhoham*, *bodhoham* or *soham*, *soham* slowly, not hurriedly, for it does not matter at all how many times you chant. Do not think that the more you chant, the nearer you are to realisation. Do not keep count of the chanting. Chant it feelingly, intensely, knowingly or understandingly. It must create a thought corresponding to its meaning. Gradually, by practice you begin to

dwelling on that one thought alone, exclusive of all other thoughts. When thus the mind dwells on one thought (there is no flow of umpteen thoughts but one constant thought) alone, it ceases to be the mind, because flow is its very nature. A river is flowing. You construct a bund across it. The flow of water stops and on one side of the bund a lake is formed. There is no more a river there but only a lake because the very integral nature of the river has been annulled by the bund. Similarly, when you dwell on this one constant thought, the mind is annihilated. But still there is that one constant thought. But this thought itself being *bodhoham* (Pure Consciousness is the "I", ego, within) a state comes, where, as you go on meditating, even that thought dies and you just merge with the Pure Consciousness. There is no more body or mind consciousness. You are the Pure Consciousness, *parama poorna satchidananda*. Remember, Pure Consciousness, Self and Atman are the same.

How the thought itself dies can only be explained by similies.

When a body is to be cremated, it is placed on the top of a pile of firewood and set fire to. In order that the body may be burnt completely, the body and the heap of firewood are constantly stirred up by a long stick. When the body and the firewood are completely burnt up, the stick used to stir the firewood is also completely burnt up. Similarly, when the flow of thoughts is stopped by catching hold of one thought and keeping it constantly, and thus when the mind dies completely, that thought also dies. In *Atma Bodha* there is a *sloka*:

कृत्वा ज्ञानं स्वयं नश्येज्जलं कतकरेणुवत् ॥

Kritva jnaanam svayam nasyejjalam katakarenuvat

Kataka is a nut which is powdered and put in muddy water. The property of the *kataka* nut is that it makes the water crystal clear by removing the dirt from it. The dirt goes and settles at the bottom and along with it the *kataka* powder also goes and settles at the bottom.

So also, the thought, that is used to remove all other thoughts from the mind itself dies after removing all other thoughts. The mind dying and that one thought dying will be simultaneous.

The thought that is used to drive out all the other thoughts is *bodhoham* or *soham*.

These have been given to us by our ancient *rishis* who had themselves attained realisation through these *mantras*. They are short, rhythmic, and very deep in meaning. If you translate them into other languages, they become lengthy and lose their beauty and charm.

In *Mundakopanishad*, there is a *mantra*:

प्रणवो धनुः शरो ह्यात्मा ब्रह्म तल्लक्ष्यमुच्यते ।

अप्रमत्तेन वेद्धव्यं शरवत् तन्मयो भवेत् ॥

Pranavo dhanuh saro hyaatmaa

Brahmatallakshyamuchyate,

Appramattena veddhavyam

saravat tanmayo bhavet.

“Let the Infinite *Brahman* be your *lakshya* or target. Shoot at it with the arrow of your mind; let the *dhanu* (bow), from which we are shooting, be the syllable or *mantra* you are uttering. Do not let the arrows miss the target by being inattentive. When you practise thus, your aim becomes better and the arrows go and strike the

target. So also your mind will go to the *Brahman* and merge with it."

You may not succeed in maintaining the one thought, *akhandakaravritti*, perfectly at the beginning. There are so many *vasanas* stored up in our minds as goods are stored in godowns, that their force will make itself felt at first. The mind will run about again and again and will refuse to be tied down to the one thought. It goes out because of *raga*, *dwesha* and *bhaya* (attraction, repulsion and fear). Remove them first. *Raga*, *dwesha* and *bhaya* will be there as long as there is an object you desire, an object which you are repulsed from, an object or incident which you fear, etc. When you dwell upon the Ultimate Reality (there is only One Reality and that is 'I') more and more, and since this consciousness does not allow of any duality in it, the attraction and repulsion you have for the world will go away little by little. Attraction and repulsion you have only because of the dualistic understanding in the mind. So, as you dwell on the one ultimate reality, which is the 'I' consciousness Atman in you, the dualistic understanding and consequently the *raga* and *dwesha* will fade away. Go on meditating in this way by dwelling on the one *vritti* (thought). You must meditate twice or thrice for one hour at least at a stretch, in a day—morning and evening (or night). Sit and meditate positively, knowing that you must realise, because it is difficult at the beginning for the mind to turn inward. So many thoughts come and trouble you. The force of *vasanas* accumulated in a million births is there. To kill the mountainous bulk of *vasanas* is difficult. You can only blast it little by little by the dynamite of *soham* or *bodho-ham*. So don't get depressed if your mind strays here and

there, away from the one *vritti*. Slowly your mind gets calmer and calmer. The onrush of thoughts decreases.

प्रशान्तमनसं ह्येनं योगिनं सुखमुत्तमम् ।

उपैति शान्तरजसं ब्रह्मभूतमकल्मषम् ॥

Prasaantamanasam hyenam Yoginam sukhamuttamam

Upaiti saantharajasam Brahmabhootamakalmasham.

Brahma-jnana dawns only in that *yogi* whose mind has become *santa* (calm and serene). What is the cause of *asanti* (disturbance), absence of calmness and serenity in your mind? *Raga*, *dwesha* and *bhaya*. We have attraction to or repulsion from the objects of the world. When an obstruction comes in the path of fulfilling the desires, anger swells up. Again, we are for ever afraid of this and that, and unnecessarily worry about trifles. All these disturbances of the mind occur, only because our dualistic understanding, namely, there is something apart from us, separate and different from us. This dualistic *bodha* (understanding) must go away. Dualistic *bodha* does not mean, 'God is separate and I am separate' but it means there is something in the world apart from me." How to remove this misunderstanding? If you dwell on that one unitary consciousness, the Pure Consciousness, with the *bhavana* (feeling) "It is all one and that is "I", it removes the dualistic feeling in you and *raga*, *dwesha* and *bhaya* go away little by little, as husk from the paddy. Once the husk has been removed, even if you put the husk and paddy together again, they will not unite. So also once the dualistic *bodha* is removed, even if you live in the world of multiplicity, it does not affect you. Your mind will be pure, calm and free. The mind which now weighs

heavily on you becomes light. Its issuing-forth tendency decreases. It dwells more easily and constantly on the *akhandakaravritti*, constant contemplation.

How do you then react to the world and what are the changes coming in you?

संशान्तया सततसुप्तधियैव वृत्त्या ।

कार्यं करोमि न च किञ्चिदहं करोमि ॥

Samsaantayaa satatasuptadhiyaiva vritttyaa,

Kaaryam karomi na cha kinchidaham karomi.

(*Yogavasishtha*)

When some duty or *karya* comes in your way, when somebody asks you to do something, when circumstances call forth from you certain actions, then alone will you respond or react. The extrovert tendency of the mind will stop, and whenever you are free, your mind will go on chanting within "*soham, soham.*" Such a mind which retreats more and more within is called *prasanta* mind. A mind whose nature is to go out is called *asanta* mind. The inner feature of one with a *prasanta* mind is the absence of *raga*, *dwesha* and *bhaya*. The external symptoms are, he will not go on reacting to external circumstances unnecessarily. and the pre-occupation with *sankalpas* (imagination) fear and useless desires will go away. How much time the ordinary man wastes on useless *sankalpas*, thinking about purely imaginary things! It makes his life ebb away, sucking away his mental energy. We do not realise how precious our mental energy is. Scientists do not know how to convert mental energy into physical and chemical energy. They do not know that atom bombs are nothing compa-

red to the force of mental energy. Our ancient *rishis* knew the method of this conversion and when necessity was there, they converted their mental energy into physical energy. But they did not misuse this power.

When thus the mind becomes *prasanta*, your *rajo-guna* goes away. The effect of this will be seen in the house, in the office, in the market place and everywhere. Pride and egoism will leave you. The more and more you meditate, you will have love, universal love, towards every being. Others will feel happy to be with you. When you see suffering anywhere, your mind will be highly sensitive to it. You will become a veritable instrument of God for the Divine power to operate. Every thought-emanation will have a wonderful power. Physical activity will get reduced. You will have no more of the *rajasik* desires, 'I want this and I want that.' You will not fret and fume, run here and there to amass more and more wealth. You will become intellectual, a man of thought and not of profuse needless activity. The question may arise in our mind—'Will Vedanta kill activity?' No; because, suppose we now engage in one hundred actions, ninety of which are useless, a '*prasanta*' man will not engage in these ninety useless actions, but will do only those few actions, which will help him and others alike. That he is trying to reach God will be silently conveyed to the other people who come in contact with him. A fraction of that very calmness and *ananda* will be enjoyed by them too. Whatever he does, it will only help others and not hinder them. Many people doubt whether they should practise and cultivate strict *brahmacharya* in order to start meditation. I tell you: "Sit and meditate. *Brahmacharya* will be a by-product. Virtue will be a by-product." If you try to

cultivate virtue for virtue's sake, it is good, but there is an easier way, higher way—through meditation. When you progress in meditation, good qualities will take root in you automatically. Any *kalmasha* (impurity) in you will go away. You will become a veritable God in your goodness. Don't be afraid that if you start being really good and generous, the things you have will go away and you will not be able to have a comfortable life. Krishna says:

तेषां नित्याभियुक्तानां योगक्षेमं वहाम्यहम् ॥

Teshaam nityaabhiyuktaanaam yogakshemam vahaamyaham.

You need not worry about your *yoga-kshema*. You will be perfectly happy in the world. Whether it is through money or not, I cannot say, but you will be most happy. Life will be fulfilled in every way, if you take directly to the path of *Brahma vidya*. Your idea now is that only if you have so much of money you can be happy. As you meditate you will find that your happiness does not depend upon money at all. All the same, your material prosperity will not suffer. We are like cocks and hens, which run about here and there and peck worms in the dirt. Become a skylark, then you can soar high and look down from above, having a clearer and expanded view of things, imparting joy to others. Your talks and actions would be like the melodious notes of the skylark. Outlive the cock-and-hen state and come to the skylark state.

In *Mandukya-Karika* of Gaudapada, there is a *sloka*:

योगिनो बिभ्यति ह्यस्मात्
अभये भयदर्शिनः ॥

*Yogino bibhyati hyasmaat
Abhaye bhayadarsinah.*

“If you go and talk these things to ordinary people they will not understand. They will be afraid of it. It (*Brahma vidya*) is the only ‘*abhayam*’, refuge, for them to go beyond all *bhaya*, fear. But in this most fearless, the most protecting, the most fulfilling *sadhana*, they find fear, because they cannot even imagine what a wonderful awakening and state it would be.”

Some people come and tell me that I should not have uttered the *advaita mantras* like ‘*soham*’, ‘*bodhoham*’, etc., openly. I am telling these *mantras* publicly because—

श्रुत्वाप्येनं वेद न चैव कश्चित् ॥

Srutvaapyenam veda na chaiva kaschit.

If two thousand people hear these *mantras*, probably twenty people will understand them properly and benefit thereby. If I do not say this, probably even this twenty will not get an opportunity of hearing this. Some people are afraid whether by uttering the *mantras* “*soham*”, “*bodhoham*” they will get headaches and other ailments and whether the Gods whom they are worshipping will come and choke their throats at midnight and curse them! I tell you: You are going to the God of Gods, to the divinity of divinities, nay to the original source of existence. You are by-passing and transcending these lesser things. The God you are worshipping, if he is really good and unselfish, ought to be glad that you have taken up this path. He ought to be interested in *jnana* himself! If he is not happy, understand He is worse than a ghost and is extremely selfish. Throw Him away. We do not want such Gods. Anyhow, all these are your

own doubts and confusions and not of the deity you are attached to.

इह चेदवेदीदथ सत्यमस्ति
न चेदिहावेदीन्महती विनष्टिः ॥

*Iha chedavedeedatha satyamasti,
Na chedihaavedeenmahatee vinashtih.*

If you know it yourself now, supreme is your gain, for you are one with the Reality. If you do not, supreme is your loss. It depends only on your *paurusha* (determination and will-power). Krishna, after telling Arjuna about all the paths, finally says,—*yathechchhasi tathaa kuru* (do as you like).

In the Gita also it is said:

राजविद्या राजगुह्यं पवित्रमिदमुत्तमम् ।
प्रत्यक्षावगमं धर्म्यं सुसुखं कर्तुमव्ययम् ॥

*Raajavidyaa raajaguhyam pavitramidamuttamam,
Pratyakshaavagamam dharmyam susukham kartumavyayam.*

People say: “Oh *Brahma vidya* is difficult. It is not for us.” Krishna says, even if you practise *Brahma vidya* a little, it will never perish. *Brahmavidya* is such a wonderful science. It is not a *karma* but a *dharma*. Even a little practice of it will protect you from *prapancha bhaya* (fears of worldly life). It is the king of all sciences. It is the king of all secrets. It requires application on your part to know it. Sharpen your wits, and think properly in a methodical way, to know it. It is not hidden by anybody, but it is hidden to the gross mind. It is the best of all things available in the world. It is the greatest purificatory

thing, *pavitram*, as the call of the senses, the pull of the flesh, etc., will fall off once you are in it. Your senses will not drag you and your mind will not distract you. This is the best of all, as this alone is capable of giving you lasting and permanent *ananda*.

The result is *pratyaksha* (directly perceptible) in your own lifetime. In all other *karmas* the result is not *pratyaksha*. You may go on doing *pooja* for attaining *swarga*, but this attainment may be possible only after your death. There is no *pratyaksha phala* (direct result) in this life. In Vedanta you have to hear it, assimilate it, come to a rational conviction and start meditation. It will then end in *jnana*. As a scientist ends his analysing and experimenting in his laboratory as soon as the result is proved, so also in Vedanta, by doing contemplation, you will be ending in *jnana*, after which meditation itself will cease. This *dharma* will sustain you at all times. Other external objects can never protect you.

So, the first effect of meditation is, your *rajo-guna* will go away. *Raga*, *dvesha* and the impurities of your heart will have to leave you. The mind will start dying little by little. Your life will get fulfilled in every way, and finally a day will come when you will have the great illumination, *nirvikalpa samadhi* or *chaitanya samadhi*.

न हि ज्ञानेन सदृशं पवित्रमिह विद्यते ॥

Na hi jnaanena sadrisam pavitramiha vidyate

The greatest purificatory thing in the world is *jnana*. The impurity that comes in the mind can be removed only by *jnana*.

Meditation has an effect on our physical life also. When you start meditating, the bulkiness of the body will

go away, if you are bulky. Suppose you are very much attached to tamarind, chilli, etc, this taste will change and you will naturally begin to like *satvik* food. Suppose you take too much of food the quantity will reduce. If you sit and meditate, subtle changes will take place in the body and the mind. Anger, disrespectful and quarrelsome nature, hatred and jealousy will all go away. You become purer and better. Until yesterday your wife was regarding you as husband. But when these changes take place in you through meditation, she will start regarding you as a representation of God. Removing the dirt completely from his mind and constantly attaching himself to the soul, a *yogi* gets the wonderful happiness, the *ananda*, that is to be had only out of one's contact with the Infinite. The very process gives him *sukha* and when it ends in realisation, he is submerged in *ananda sagara* (ocean of bliss).

Meditation is not to be confined to two, three or four hours each day which you spend in actual *nididhyasana*. Whenever you have a free moment in the course of the day's activities, in the office, in the kitchen or while travelling in the bus, just go on repeating mentally, consciously, understandingly, "*soham, soham*". Don't waste your free time in useless thoughts and *sankalpas* and in vain imaginations. Even the time we have to spend in the latrine need not be wasted because the mind is not *asuddha* (impure) even in the latrine. Mind is *asuddha* (impure) only when it is loaded with *raga*, *dvesha*, *kama*, *krodha*, etc. We are having a typically wrong notion about what is *suddha* and what is *asuddha*. We think physical dirt alone is dirt. Physical cleanliness is of course essential, but what is more important is mental purity or

mental cleanliness. When you remove *raga* and *dwesha* from the mind, it is *suddha*. People have a wrong notion that we are polluting the name of God if we utter it when we are physically unclean. Just think. Water removes the dirt of the body. But do you refuse to enter water (of a tank or river) thinking that the water will become dirty? No, because you know the water will not become dirty. Similarly, the greatest purificatory thing in the world which will cleanse your heart of all its impurities is *Brahma chintana* (thought of *Brahman*) and it won't be tainted by your impurity. By the very process of keeping the *soham* thought in you constantly, or as much as possible, your mind, freed from *raga* and *dwesha*, becomes pure. At first by the force of habit, your mind will go back to useless thoughts again and again. Consciously bring it back and go on chanting *soham, soham*. It may be difficult at first, but it becomes easier and easier gradually. As days pass by, the mind will come to a state where, whenever it has a free moment, it will start thinking about the Infinite Reality, and whenever there is work, it will think of work. The useless spending of our mental energy, when we have no work, will stop.

Thus there are two methods of meditation: (i) at regular times in the morning and evening (or night), at least one hour each. This is called *nididhyasana*: and (ii) throughout the day whenever the mind is not engaged in otherwise useful work. i. e., *anusandhana*. Meditation can be done not only when you are awake, but even during sleep. You may ask how.

Sleep and thoughts do not overlap. When thought ceases, sleep comes on. Before sleeping, go on mentally chanting "*soham, soham, soham*", dwelling upon that

thought, knowingly and feelingly. Since you are not going to leave this thought, a part of the mind which is always awake even during sleep (that is why some people walk in sleep, some even compose beautiful poems and some are able to solve difficult problems of mathematics), will continue to keep this thought. So when you wake up, you wake up chanting "*soham*". Until sleep, this thought was there and on waking this thought is there and hence you can logically conclude that this thought must have been there even during sleep. Train your mind to meditate during sleep. All your *vasanas* can thus be annihilated and got rid off. All the base and evil traits dwelling in the sub-conscious mind can, by this method, be sublimated or wiped out.

Start practising meditation from today itself. Do not wait for tomorrow. Do not let any other consideration like "I am not a Brahmin, can I attain *Brahma jnana*?" affect you in the least. Do not be tied down by caste and creed. Vedanta is for people of every caste, every colour and every creed.

In the "*Vajra Suci Upanishad*" a discussion is made as to who is a Brahmin, who is a Kshatriya and so on.

"Is the body Brahmin or the soul Brahmin? If the body is Brahmin, when a Brahmin dies and his son cremates the body, the son is committing the terrible sin of *brahmahatti* (killing a Brahmin). If you say the soul is Brahmin, it cannot be, because the soul is casteless and creedless. It has no attributes. If neither the body nor the soul is a Brahmin, what then is the Brahmin? Arguing thus, the Upanishad concludes that it is neither the body, nor the soul, but the qualities or *gunas* that make you

function in a particular way that determine your caste. So a man who has discriminative intellect and predominantly *satva guna* is a Brahmin: One who is *rajasik* with an element of *satvaguna* in him is a Kshatriya. One who is *tamasik* by nature is a Sudra and one who has a mixture of *rajasik* and *tamasik* nature in him is a Vaisya. It is a psychological division and not physical or hereditary. Vedanta is subtle and cannot be understood unless you have a keen and discriminative intellect. If you are able to understand it, you are absolutely fit for adopting it as *sadhana*. Do not have any doubts about it. Do not feel either proud or ashamed of your caste.

Many people have another doubt. "I am married and have a family. Can I have *Moksha*?" I ask you: "Who is married?" It is your body which has married, not your inner Atman. The marriage is of the body and not of the soul. Learn to detach your true personality from the body and mind. Let the body do its *dharma*. Do not be attached to it. View it as objectively as you would anybody else's body. After locating the inner 'I', your self, have *sakshi bhava* towards everything in the world including your body. This is how Vasishtha and other great *rishis* carried on the duties of householders even after realisation. They were not affected by them. Have the firm conviction that whatever the body or mind does, you (the real 'I') are unaffected, unpolluted.

So let not any consideration like caste, colour, creed, sex or status keep you back from meditation. None is excluded from the ambit of Vedanta. The only requisites determining your eligibility for *Brahma vidya* are:

(i) *Viveka* (discriminative understanding as to what is permanent and what is impermanent);

(ii) *Vairagya* (dispassion or detachment towards worldly things);

(iii) *Mumukshutva* (an ardent yearning to attain *Mukti*);

(iv) *Vyavasayatmika Buddhi* (one-pointedness of mind or determination that you will realise in this very life); and

(v) *Sama* and *Dama*, (regulation and control of the mind and the sense organs.)

When a man possesses these qualifications, he is fit to attain *Bharma jnana* and no other consideration like caste, colour, etc. can bar his way.

वैराम्यबोधौ पुरुषस्य पक्षिवत् पक्षौ विजानीहि विचक्षण त्वम् ।

विमुक्तिसैधाग्रतलाधिरोहणं ताभ्यां विना नान्यतरेण सिध्यति ॥

Vairagyabodhau purushasya pakshivat

pakshau vijaaaneehi vichakshana tvam,

Vimuktisaudhaagratalaadhirohanam

taabhyaam vinaa naanyatarena siddhyati.

“O wise men, *viveka* and *vairagya* are the sole equipment for a man to ascend to the top of the mansion called *Mukti*. They are as indispensable to him as the two wings are to a bird.”

Sri Rama says in *Yogavasishtha*:

अयमहमिदमाततं ममेति स्फुरितमपास्य बलादसत्यमन्तः ।

रिपुमतिबलिनं मनो निहन्मि प्रशममुपैमि नमोस्तु ते विवेक ॥

Ayamahamidamaatatam mameti

Sphuritamapaasya balaadasatyamantah,

Ripumatibalinam mano nihanmi

Prasamamupaimi namostu te viveka.

“The untruth that is glorifying itself in the mind, the falsehood “this is mine and that is mine”, which arises out of our attachment to the physical body to which we are hugging on, must be rooted out. O mind, you are catching hold of false things and are pretending to be great. I know you and I am not going to believe you any further. You are the strongest and most dangerous enemy that I have. I am going to kill you by means of *viveka*. O *viveka*, you have taught me these things, you have made me discriminate between the real and the unreal. You having been my help, guide and *guru*, I take refuge in you; strengthening myself with your help, I will kill this mind. Then alone can I attain *santi*.”

Sri Krishna says:

बुद्धौ शरणमन्विच्छ ।

Buddhau saranamanvichcha.

Take refuge in your own *buddhi* (*jnana buddhi*, *sama buddhi*). Use your *viveka*. Determine: “I shall kill the mind. No trace of it shall be left.” Have this *vyavasa-yatmika buddhi* (one-pointed determination). Having known that the Ultimate Reality is Pure Consciousness, *Satchidananda* and that it is as much within me as outside and having come to the determination, “I must understand it, actualise it, know it within myself”, do not remain at this theoretical conviction. Start practising.

Sankara says in “*Aparokshanubhooti*”:

नित्याभ्यासादृते प्राप्तिर्न भवेत् सच्चिदात्मनः ।

तस्माद् ब्रह्म निदिध्यासेज्जिज्ञासुः श्रेयसे चिरम् ॥

*Nityaabhyaasaadr̥te praaptir̥na bhavet̥ Satchidaatmanah
Tasmaad̥ Brahma nididhyaasejjijnaasuh̥ sreyaase chiram̥.*

Your attainment of *Satchidananda* will never occur without constant effort and practice for a long period, *nityaabhyasa*. You are breathing day in and day out. When you are engaged in activities, are you striving to go on breathing? Do you ever forget to breath? It automatically goes on. Similarly, it is possible to make the mind meditate even when you are engaged in work. You have to make it *nityaabhyasa*. A *jijnasu* (an individual who has a desire to know the Ultimate Reality), who determines that *Moksha* is his goal, life's aim, it being the only *sreya* which is permanent and can give abiding *ananda*, *peace*, must do *abhyasa* for a long time; not for one or two days. It is such a process that you do not get tired of it. You will find happiness in the very process, effort and striving. Determine to meditate for a long time, for a lengthy period.

If you can meditate sincerely one hundred hours each month, for one year, you will understand what spiritual life is. Your very life will be changed. It becomes joyous, wonderful, serene and perfect. You will then think: "O God, how kind and merciful you are, for blessing me like this. For the state that I have attained now, in this life, I would have gladly sacrificed even a thousand lives of mine."

The very process is *ananda*. Little by little the mind is thinned out. An un-ruffled, non-moving, serene attitude will remain in you throughout your daily dealings with people and things in the world. You, being serene, good and perfect, will be imparting the same to others. Every-

where you will encounter only smoothness and no friction. Life will become smooth and peaceful, serene and beautiful. If an engine, which is rusted, is cleaned and lubricated, how smooth will it work! So smooth will be your life.

Sankara sums up his commentary on “*Sanatsujateeya*” quoting a set of beautiful, melodious and meaningful verses:

नित्यशुद्धबुद्धमुक्तभावमीशमात्मना
भावयन् षडिन्द्रियाणि संनियम्य निश्चलः
अस्ति वस्तु चिद्घनं जगत्प्रसूतिकारणं
न नश्वरं तदुद्भवं जगत्तमोनुदं च यत्
तत्पदैकवाचकं सदामृतं निरंजनम्
चित्तवृत्तिद्वक्सुखं तदस्म्यहं तदस्म्यहं ॥

*Nityasuddhabuddhamuktabhaavameesamaatmanaa
Bhaavayan shadindriyaani samniyamya nischalah
Asti vastu chidghanam jagatprasootikaaranam
Na naswaram tadudbhavam jagattamonudam cha yat
Tatpadaikavaachakam sadaamritam niranjanam
Chittavrittidriksukham tadasmyaham tadasmyaham.*

“I am That, I am That, I am the *ananda* that I get from being the witness of the thoughts in the mind. I am the joy that I derive when I identify myself with the witness (*sakshi*). That *sakshi* is always pure, all-knowing, always free, liberated and is in the form of Pure Consciousness. It is the all pervading *sarvesvara*. Having controlled the six *indriyas* (the five sense-organs and the

mind) keep quiet and meditate. You can then locate the *vastu*, that *Atman* which is the very womb from which the whole universe has emanated. The moment you locate it there is no more decay and death. That *Brahman* is the very cause sustaining the world. That alone can remove the darkness of the world and the mind. That light is the only light."

"If you go on thinking of (or meditating on) it, the Pure Consciousness, it will give you *nirantara* (permanent) *ananda*, *Mukti*. Not only is the very process *amrita* (nectar-like), but the process is one in which you get rid of all your *papa* or sin, *niranjanam*. All impurities are washed away."

"I am that Pure Consciousness, I am That, I am That."

Chapter 14

RAJA YOGA OR BRAHMA VIDYA

The ancient words used to indicate the science or knowledge pertaining to the realisation of the Infinite were *Brahma vidya*, *raja vidya* or *raja yoga*. The word *raja yoga* is very much misunderstood. Many present-day pundits, and even ancient scholars have interpreted it to mean Patanjali's *ashtanga yoga*, which is completely wrong. The word *raja yoga* has never been mentioned by Patanjali. Then why should we try to put words into his mouth? The *ashtanga yoga* of Patanjali which starts with the external gross body is widely different from the *raja yoga* (which is the synonym for *Brahma vidya*), which starts with the mind, although the eight steps in both of them have identical names. The eight steps are: *yama*, *niyama*, *asana*, *pranayama*, *pratyahara*, *dharana*, *dhyana*, and *samadhi*. Why did Patanjali start with the gross body? It was because many people of that age had lost the capacity to discriminate and properly understand Vedantic culture. So he gave out things in such a simple and tangible way, that even ordinary people would understand it and little by little come to the Ultimate science and Reality. We, the people of the present age, though we do not know Sanskrit much, are in a position to understand the essence contained in our *sastras*, because of the easy availability of good translations and we have also great realised souls who have taught us the essence in an easy and clear

language. So the moment we understand that it is all a process of the mind, we can go directly, without starting from ABCD. Know that the mind is everything, catch hold of it and control it.

In the world there are two manifestations of the Infinite; one material and the other mental. The subtlest of the material manifestations is air, *prana* or breath. The breath can be taken as representing all the external or material manifestations for, all those things extended as matter in the universe are held by the cosmic *prana*, which can be represented by air or breath. The mental or conscious manifestation of the Infinite can be represented by the mind.

Ramana Maharshi says:

चित्तवायवः चित्क्रियायुताः

शाखयोर्द्वयी शक्तिमूलका ॥

Chittavaayavah chitkriyaayutaah,

Sakhayordwayee saktimoolakaa.

The two functionaries of the Infinite, so far as we can locate in the human system, are the inner mind and the outer breath. They have the same source, as the two branches of a tree have the same trunk as their source. Some people catch hold of the external breath and do *pranayama* and get a sort of *jada samadhi* or stupor, thinking that it is *samadhi*. Ramana says: If we control and stop the breath, the mind will have a sort of *laya*. The mind will retreat from the body, stand separate without conscious external manifestation. But this is not the real *samadhi*. There is something higher, of the nature of Pure Consciousness.

Instead of doing *pranayama*, catch hold of the mind and stop it. The mind, instead of being in *laya*, will die out.

The aim of *Brahma vidya* is killing the mind and not having *laya* of the mind. We are having *laya* of the mind in sleep. Is sleep of any use in realising the Infinite?

We will have only *laya*, if we do the *hatha yogi* type of *yoga* practice. It has to be transcended. When a *hatha yogi* comes out of his *laya*, his mind remains the same old mind. But through *Brahma vidya* if you kill the mind by a conscious process, the dead mind will never come back.

Think about that one Ultimate Reality, Atman, in you. Cultivate *akhandakaravritti*, the thought that is nearest to the Infinite, in other words, remembering the Self. By that alone, by going on remembering without break of that one Pure Consciousness, will the mind be killed and it will go back and sink in Pure Consciousness.

All our great *acharyas* and *rishis*, who have realised, say the same thing. The *jijnasus* who have to attain *Mukti*, have to do *abhyasa* for a long time. What sort of *abhyasa*, practice? Observing and following the eight steps—*yama*, *niyama*, *asana*, *pranayama*, *pratyahara*, *dharana*, *dhyana* and *samadhi*—constitute *abhyasa*.

Although these are the same eight steps given in *Ashtanga yoga*, there its application is to the grosser individual. But in *Brahma vidya*, Sankara explains the same terms in a subtle way, dealing with the mind and not the physical body.

Sankara explains the eight steps in the following way:

सर्वं ब्रह्मेति विज्ञानादिन्द्रियग्रामसंयमः ।

यमोऽयमिति संप्रोक्तोऽभ्यसनीयो मुहुर्मुहुः ॥

*Sarvam Brahmeti vijnaanaadindriyagraamasamyamah,
Yamoyamiti samproktobhyasaneeyo muhurmuhu.*

The first step is controlling the sense organs (*indriya niyamana*), not by suppression but by sublimation. If you suppress any urge of the senses, it will only come out in another form with doubled vigour. So, the process should be one of sublimation. If there is darkness, will it be of any use fighting with it? Bring the light and darkness will automatically disappear. Better still, bring in the light even before darkness comes, so that it cannot come at all—it has no chance. Avoidance of a sense-thirst by prior channelisation of it in the spiritual direction is sublimation, and suppression is fighting it after it has assumed a strong and virulent form.

Similarly, do not suppress any urge of the sense organs after it has come. Before the reason or cause for suppression comes, before the urge to satisfy the desire of a sense organ comes, practise *yama* in such a way that the cause will never originate.

Vedanta says: *Sarvam khalvidam Brahma*: All this, the Universe itself, is verily *Brahman*, the Ultimate *sat*, the nameless and formless Reality. Where can your *indriyas* go for pleasure, when you try constantly to keepy our mind engaged in the thought of the one Infinite Reality? Whenever the *indriyas* go out thinking that they can find pleasure outside, the mind reinforced by *viveka* will arrest and stop them saying: "Better don't go there because the

pleasure you get will be but transient. Moreover there is nought but *Brahman* everywhere. So where do you go?" Thus the mind stops the *indriyas* before there arises a cause for suppression.

In the Gita, Krishna says:

ध्यायतो विषयान् पुंसः सङ्गस्तेषूपजायते ।
 सङ्गात् सञ्जायते कामः कामात्क्रोधोऽभिजायते ॥
 क्रोधात्मभवति संमोहः संमोहात्स्मृतिविभ्रमः ।
 स्मृतिभ्रंशाद्बुद्धिनाशो बुद्धिनाशात्प्रणश्यति ॥

*Dhyaayato vishayaan pumsah sangasteshoopajaayate,
 Sangaat sanjaayate kaamaḥ kaamaatkrodhobhijaayate.
 Krodhaatbhavati sammohah sammohaatsmritivibhramah,
 Smritibhramsaadbuddhinaaso buddhinaasaat pranasyati.*

First of all you think of an object. When you think of it for some time, desire develops. It becomes strongly expressed and you start working to get it. You come across obstructions in the course of the working and you have *krodha* (anger). Thus one thing leads to another and finally you perish. The origin of it all was in your mind, in the thought you entertained first. The process of *yama* is to stop that very thought. Ordinary yogis let the thought develop and express through the *indriyas* and then they suppress it. The *Brahma vidya* way is that when a sensuous idea sprouts up in the mind, it is stopped at the very source, by bringing in a higher and nobler thought.

Supposing a friend calls you for a game of cards. You must reason it out like this within your mind: "What is in a game of cards? Is that going to give me real joy or pleasure? No, it cannot, for, when it is all *Brahman*,

Pure Consciousness, where are my *indriyas* to go for pleasure? *Soham, Soham.*” The moment this thought comes, the other thought, the tempting thought, will just die away.

Whenever the idea of an *indriya* pleasure comes, go on stopping it at the very source for a few days. Gradually such ideas won't sprout there at all. Instead you will have the constant thought, *Soham, Soham*. Suppose somebody scolds you or rebukes you, insults you and calls you a fool. If you identify yourself with the body and the mind, you immediately get upset. You want to hurt him back. But when you identify yourself with the Pure Consciousness, Self, the moment anger comes, you will think: “Why this anger? Am I the body or the mind that I should feel hurt at his words? How can his words affect me? They cannot, because *Soham, Atman am I.*” This thought should automatically take place in you. Recognise that you are not the body or mind but the *sakshi* which is not affected by *raga* or *dwesha* or *sukha* or *dukkha*. This will make you firm as a rock in the face of the onslaughts of life. Waves do not have any effect on the rocks. If at all they affect the rocks, it is only to make them smoother and smoother, finer and finer. So also the troubles and tribulations of every-day life will only help you develop spiritually. Try to retain the consciousness *Soham* or *bodhoham*, always, throughout the day. Any *niyamana*, control of the senses, is to be brought about by this remembrance. When the mind starts thinking about a pleasure it wants, automatically the remembrance of your true Self, the *Soham* thought, should come up and apply the brakes to the mind. This feeling (remembrance) ought to come, or else it should be made to come.

In practising *yama* this way, the control of the senses becomes a matter of easy accomplishment for you. There is no struggle, stress or strain. Lift, uplift and sublimate the mind. When you are having a low thought in the mind, the best way to remove it is to sublimate it by a noble thought. In the initial stages the *indriyas* may disturb you. A man who takes to Vedanta is often of *rajo guna*. Although he wants to have Vedantic realisation, there will be so many lapses in his private and public life in the initial stages of his *sadhana*. The mind will go after the *vishayas* and often he will regret. For example a friend calls you to spend a few hours in useless talk. You think you will go and come back soon. But going there, you are caught up in it without your knowledge. After two or three hours you somehow extricate yourself and come back. Then you start regretting why you ever went at all. Thus, at first, although you do not want to fall a prey to the *vishayas*, you invariably do get caught up. But such lapses will become more and more infrequent as you go on cultivating the *Soham* thought in you. A time will come when you will have such a pleasant and easy life, that without the least stress or strain you will have a good control over yourself. Go on nurturing, developing and strengthening your mind by the *Soham bhavana*. Turn it Godward. The petty attachments will get snapped gradually.

This is such an elevating process compared to the methods of suppression. The *hatha yogis*, though they have desires, will forcibly suppress them. Those will only express themselves with greater vigour later. Publicly they may be moral, but many of them are privately licentious. They have not learnt the correct and easy technique

of *yama* by sublimation. Here you don't have to deal with the *indriyas*. When we start controlling the *indriyas* by the mind, it becomes very difficult, because it is the mind which is the root cause of our desires and not the *indriyas*. The mind has a feeling and the mind expresses it through the *indriyas*. It is the feeling in the mind that the sadhaka has to control. When a feeling gets out of the mind and expresses itself in the *indriyas*, at that developed stage it is very difficult to control it. It will be like a boat without proper oars and sail. Such a boat will be dragged away by a storm. So also when a desire expresses itself in the *indriyas*, it will drag away the mind also with it. So avoid the wrong feelings in the mind by sublimating them.

There is a seemingly paradoxical stanza in Gita (III Chapter):

सदृशं चेष्टते स्वस्याः प्रकृतेर्ज्ञानवानपि
प्रकृतिं यान्ति भूतानि निग्रहः किं करिष्यति ॥

*Sadrisam cheshtate swasyaah prakriterjnaanavaanapi,
Prakritim yaanit bhootaani nigrahah kim karishyati.*

Its literal translation is: "Even a wise man acts according to his nature. Every being follows its own nature. Then what can restraint do?"

This seems to contradict the very purpose of *yama*, which is to control our senses. If Krishna says, "What is the use of restraining our senses, for we can only follow our own nature?", then he is contradicting his own statement.

यस्त्विन्द्रियाणि मनसा नियम्यारभतेऽर्जुन ।

Yastvindriyaani manasaa ntyamyaarabhaterjuna,

“That one who controls his senses and works on with his organs of action in the spirit of *karma yoga*, excels.” What he actually means by *jnanavan* in the *sloka*, *sadrisam cheshthate*, etc., is not a realised soul (*Brahma jnani*) but a theoretical *jnani* who has not put his theory into practice. He has learned and has understood Vedanta but has not evolved from his mundane level because he has not converted his knowledge into practice. Such a *jnanavan*, in spite of his learning, acts according to his own old nature. When he has not absorbed Vedanta into life, what can mere suppression of the sense appetite do? Here *ni-graha* means suppression. First he must make his Vedantic knowledge permeate his life and then elevate and sublimate his thoughts and actions. Then the control of the sense organs becomes easy. Instead, with his mind full of desires, if he suppresses his sense organs, the suppressed emotion will only express itself in another field with added vigour. Krishna says: “What is the use of such suppression?”

The Vedantic way is *niyamana*, not *nigraha*; sublimation and not suppression. I am emphasising this so much because the one thing we need most now, in this age of licentiousness, is *indriya niyamana*. We do not ourselves have any control over our sense organs and our children are worse. I tell you, even if you are past the stage and the age of practising *niyamana*, at least see that your children cultivate it. Feed them with good thoughts, help them to sublimate their low impulses. See that they develop into proper human beings, masters of themselves.

There is a story to illustrate this point. There was a learned pundit who was also a great Vedantin. One day his disciples came to his house, when he was away, to

clear some doubts. Not finding the master there, they asked his grown-up son if he could clear their doubts. But the son, though he was about twenty and already married, was rather foolish. He could not clear their doubts. The disciples went back and on the way met the father and complained to him about his son's idiocy. The father came back greatly concerned and rebuked his son. He said: "Go away from this house. Don't come back here before becoming a proper man." The son, hurt and ashamed, went away. After five years the son returned. But the father made him stand outside and went on asking questions on the *sastras*, Vedanta, etc., till he had satisfied himself that his son had indeed come back a proper man, a man of learning. Then pleased with his son, he sent him in to take his bath and food. He did not even ask his son whether he had had a long journey, whether he was tired, etc. But all the time when her husband was asking questions to their son, the mother was standing there thinking: "O my poor son looks tired. He is emaciated, and has lost his blooming looks. I must prepare special food for him in the coming days and make him put on more fat." The son's wife was watching her husband through a window and was thinking: "O! my husband has returned. I wonder whether he has brought me any good saries or ornaments!" Thus three different persons had three different attitudes. The father was concerned about the intellectual and spiritual development in his son. The mother's anxiety was solely about the son's body and physique, while the wife was more interested in what he had brought for her as presents.

When you bring up your children, have the father's attitude; make them proper men and women. If you love

your children, see that they become better than their parents. There is a *sloka*:

सर्वत्र विजयमिच्छेत् शिष्यादिच्छेत् पराजयम् ॥

Sarvatra vijayamichchhet sishyaadichchhet paraajayam.

“The *guru*’s wish is, that he must win over all other learned men, but that his own disciples must defeat him.”

Similarly, a father may wish to become the greatest of men, but he will want his son to be greater than himself. So, even if you are bad, train up your children to be good. Give them the inner culture. Try to develop in them courage, control, discipline and *jnana* by sublimating their impulses and thoughts. Meditation will prove greatly useful in developing your children. Tell a child: “You have a divine power within you. It is not the body or mind but something much greater. If you know it, you will also become divine. For that you must sit quietly, shut your eyes and think of the divinity within you.” Ask him to meditate thus at least ten to fifteen minutes repeating *Soham*, within himself. Thus trained, a child will become more and more introvert and consequently stronger and stronger physically, mentally and intellectually, because the mental energy is not uselessly dissipated. Make them start meditation at an early age. It may not have a marked effect on them immediately. The real development will be visible at the age of sixteen or eighteen, when you will see how wonderfully they blossom forth. This is the age at which childhood gives way to adulthood. This is the most delicate period when a boy or a girl may easily take to evil company. The right development at this age ensures that the boy or girl will become a proper man or woman, without getting spoiled.

Many children who do very well at school, prove complete flops in colleges. Because, having not developed the intellect, they managed to do well at school by cramming. But in colleges they had to apply their brain which let them down. On the other hand there are students who, though mediocre at school, prove brilliant in colleges, because, consciously or unconsciously, they develop an intelligent way of looking at things and applying their own brains to solve problems. From sixteen to twenty is the age of real development, when the effect of meditation will be markedly visible. When there is every chance for them to turn to low company and manners, not only will they not go that way, but their intellect and spiritual capacity will develop so much, that they will become veritable Vivekanandas! They will become wonderful citizens, real men and women, of whom the whole nation will be proud of. The very idea of *upanayan* was based on this principle of instilling this technique of inner culture, spiritual development and discipline in the boys, from their early boyhood. The kernel of this principle has gone away completely and only the shell remains. Alas!

Krishna says in the next *sloka*:

इन्द्रियस्येन्द्रियस्यार्थे रागद्वेषौ व्यवस्थितौ ।
तयोर्न वशमागच्छेत् तौ ह्यस्य परिपन्थिनौ ॥

Indriyasyendriyasyaarthe raagadweshau vyavasthitau,
Tayorna vasamaagachchhet tau hyasya paripandhinau.

This and the previous *sloka*:

सदृशं चेष्टते स्वस्याः प्रकृतेर्ज्ञानानपि ।

प्रकृतिं यान्ति भूतानि निग्रहः किं करिष्यति ॥

Sadrisam cheshtate swasyaah prakriterjnaanavaanapi,

Prakritim yaanti bhootaani nigrahaah kim karishyati

are to be taken together. First Krishna says: "It is no use suppressing the sense organs." Suppression comes only when the emotion has expressed itself in the *indriyas*, caught hold of them and the *indriyas* have almost started functioning. In this *sloka* Krishna points out a method of sublimation to control our senses. The very nature of the *indriya* is that the moment it sees something, it is either attracted to or repulsed from it. *Raga-dweshas* are there whenever the *indriyas*, senses, come in contact with the sensory objects. Krishna says: "Do not fall a prey to *raga-dwesha*. Have *samabhava*, knowing that there is but One Reality, i.e., *Brahman*. There is nothing except *Brahman*. What is there for me to be attracted to or be repulsed from?" The more and more you cultivate this awareness and dwell on it, the *raga* and *dwesha* will go away. Do not be a pet in the hands of your senses. The mischief done by the senses may be of so many kinds but the force behind each of them is *raga* and *dwesha*. Sublimate your thoughts by the *Soham* contemplation. When we identify ourselves with the Ultimate Reality, *Brahman*, the bad thoughts will never come to us. At one stroke you are avoiding bad thoughts and at the same time going towards the Ultimate Reality. Krishna gives a psychological method in those two *slokas*. By using the terms "even a *jnanavan*" he says: "Mere

theory is of no use." Start practising meditation. All bad traits and qualities will fall off by themselves. If you dwell on the 'soham bhava' whenever a desire sprouts in the mind, practising *yama* will become easier.

Sankara says:

अत्यन्तकामुकस्यापि वृत्तिः कुण्ठति मातरि ॥

Atyantakaamukasyaapi vrittih kunthati maatari.

There may be a characterless fellow, who cannot take his eyes off any goodlooking woman passing on the road. But even to such a lustful man, when his mother is by his side, such vulgar thoughts do not arise in the mind. The mother's influence is such a divinising one that low passionate thoughts cannot arise in the son's mind, when he is near her.

So also, if you dwell on this one thought that is so divinising, useless thoughts will not come near you at all. This thought is the highest, best, truest, noblest and the most elevating that a man is capable of thinking. Can any low thought come near it? Any bad trait in you will slowly get dissolved, because we develop a bad trait only by bad thoughts. As the thoughts become nobler and better, these bad traits will have no ground to breed. This one thought, *bhavana*, which is a process of remembering the inner Self, that is a spark of the Ultimate Reality, will help you ascend to *jnana*, while not allowing other mundane thoughts to enter the mind. When you go to a temple your mind is comparatively free of low thoughts, because the very temple is in a measure a representation of the Infinite. So the atmosphere in it creates such an elevating influence in the mind, that the lesser thoughts are thrown away at least temporarily.

The next development in you will be that the moment a bad thought arises in the mind, immediately the mind will reject it, as it is not complimentary to the spiritual life. The mind will have no taste to engage in such thoughts even for a little while. This is the *niyama* stage.

In this stage, the moment a bad thought comes to you, it will just bounce back like a tennis ball thrown on the wall. Sankara defines *niyamana* as:

सजातीयप्रवाहश्च विजातीयतिरस्कृतिः ।

नियमो हि परानन्दो नियमात् क्रियते बुधैः ॥

Sajaateeyapravaahascha vijaateeyatiraskritih,

Niyamo hi paraanando niyamaat kriyate budhah.

Those thoughts, which are akin to the Divine nature will flow into you; those that are inimical to it will be automatically repelled. The mind will not even consider them. In the *yama* stage, you had consciously to cultivate good thoughts, thoughts pertaining to the Ultimate Reality, in order to keep away bad thoughts. But when you come to the *niyama* stage, the process is automatic. You are not even particularly conscious that your mind rejects bad thoughts. In this stage you have so much of *ananda*, because the mind is not occupied with useless thoughts and imaginations. There will be no tension and stress and you will be free from *raga*, *dvesha* and *fear*. When your mind is occupied with good thoughts, only good things that are *kindred* to your nature like *satsang*, good books on Vedanta, etc., will come your way.

An ordinary man worries very much about trifles. If his son falls sick, he gives way to unfounded fears and

imagines the worst. A man who is in this *niyama* stage, when confronted with the same situations, thinks: "It is all the play of *Brahman*. Nothing bad can happen. Whatever happens will be for the best." Thus he keeps calm. He is conscious that there is one Infinite Reality and that he has to identify himself with That alone and not worry about trifles. Only good things will be accepted by his mind. Your friends may talk of some unworthy matters. But these won't create a movement in your mind when you have reached the *niyama* stage. This state itself will give you so much *ananda* which the things of the world can never give you.

Next comes *asana*. What is *asana*? Apart from keeping the *Soham bhava* constantly throughout the day or as much as possible, you must also devote at least one hour each in the morning and evening (or night) solely for meditation. '*Asana*' denotes the posture that is best suited for meditation. Sankara says:

सुखेनैव भवेद्यस्मिन्नजस्रं ब्रह्मचिन्तनम् ।

आसनं तद्विजानीयान्नेतरत् सुखनाशनम् ॥

*Sukhenaiva bhavedyasminnajasram Brahmachintanam,
Aasanam tadvijaaneeyaannetarat sukhanaasanam.*

We are having absolutely wrong notions about *asana*. Due to the influence of *hatha yoga*, some people think they must sit erect with the spinal column straight in *padmasana* *siddhasana*, etc., and meditate. You do not require any of these *asanas* for *Brahma vidya* meditation. It is absolutely not necessary. It will often take you nearly a year before you perfect any such *asana*. But, if you practise *Brahma vidya* meditation, properly and sincerely, you may start

having *samadhi* experience in one year, whereas it will take you longer to perfect one *asana*. The only advantage of sitting erect is that you will not be overcome by sleep. You will be alert and attentive. That is the reason why our ancient *rishis* made their disciples sit in *padma asana* or *siddha asana* while studying. You will develop a keen intellect, enjoy good health and will have no lethargy and laziness. Some people say that meditation should be done by looking at the tip of the nose or by concentrating in the space between the eye-brows. These are *hatha yogi* methods. These are for people of *rajo guna*.

Sankara says:

दृष्टिं ज्ञानमयीं कृत्वा पश्येद् ब्रह्ममयं जगत् ।

Drishtim jnanamayeem kritvaa pasyed Brahmamayam jagat.

The real *drishti*, vision, is the Vedantic understanding that the Universe is an expression of *Brahman*, that it is nothing but *Brahman*; and not looking at the tip of the nose. *Brahma jnana* is not located in the head, legs, nose or the spinal column.

Krishna says:

युक्ताहारविहारस्य युक्तचेष्टस्य कर्मसु ।

युक्तस्वप्नावबोधस्य योगो भवति दुःखहा ॥

Yuktaahaaravihaarasya yuktacheshtasya karmasu,

Yuktaswapnaavabodhasya yogo bhavati dukkhahaa.

Jnana can be had only by a man who is moderate in eating, physical exertion sleep etc. It cannot be had by torturing yourself physically. *Brahma jnana* is the development and blossoming of the very consciousness you are having. Here you have to catch hold of your

mind and the mind has to be quietened. It should not be given a chance to go wayward, wander here and there. If you sit in a curious and artificial *asana*, after sometime, when the mind is about to merge within, it will not be able to do so, because a part of the mind has to keep awake and see that the body does not fall down. Having this responsibility it will refuse to abide in itself and merge within. Sankara says: "That posture, *asana*, in which you can have continuous *Brahma chintana*, thought of *Brahman* with pleasure, ease and joy—understand that to be the real *asana*."

Do not sit in an uncomfortable posture. The best posture for most of us is to lie down flat on our back without pillow. (A pillow under the head will induce sleep.) This is called *savasana*; this is the most natural pose in which we can meditate for a long time. Mother earth will take care of our body, the mind will withdraw *into* itself and merge with the Infinite, Pure consciousness. Or else, sit down stretching your legs or recline in an easy chair. In short, take that posture which is most natural, easy and comfortable to you. Each one has to choose the best posture suited to oneself. In the beginning, the very ease of posture may induce sleep but this will go away in a few days. Another factor which may induce sleep or unconsciousness during meditation, is the food that one takes. Avoid gas-forming, fried, pungent and such indigestible food and also too much of tamarind and chillies. Take light food, especially at night. Do not fill the stomach. Fill half the stomach with food, quarter with water and leave the other quarter for the free movement of gas.

If you want to meditate at night, take food early, after returning from your office or other work. If possible do not eat rice and do not take too much butter-milk. Sour butter-milk is the younger brother of liquor. It will induce sleep. Take milk, fruits and *roties* or some such things which will not ferment and create acidic reaction in the stomach. If you take oily things like *pappad*, there will be too much bile secretion. Pickles, pulses, etc. should be taken as little as possible. It is unfortunate that our tastes are such that what is good for the health, our tongue does not like and what the tongue likes, is not good for the health. When you become a *yogi*, you must know what is good for the stomach and the body and the tongue should be made to accept what is beneficial. Take to *satvik* food. What we eat ordinarily are such, that they react with one another and get neutralised in such a way that a good lot of their nutritive value is lost. In this action and reaction many good contents go away and there is wastage of nutrition. When you take good, wholesome things, whatever you consume will be assimilated by the body; hence you need take only a small quantity. Control your tongue. If you take good food, it will give you good health, good mind, good sleep and good meditation. A poet praises Patanjali Muni thus:

योगेन चित्तस्य पदेन वाचां मलं शरीरस्य च वैद्यकेन ।

योपाकरोत् तं प्रवरं मुनीनां पतञ्जलिं प्राञ्जलिरानतोस्मि ॥

Yogena chittasya padena vaachaam

Malam sareerasya cha valdyakena,

Yopaakarot tam pravaram muneenaam

Patanjalim praanjaliraanatosmi.

“Patanjali has taught us that the dirt of the mind can be removed by *yoga*: the dirt of the tongue and mouth can be washed off by good, proper and well-meaning words and the dirt of the body can be removed by *vaidya* (proper exercises, *pranayama*, proper food, good medicines, etc.), i.e. the natural course of treatment. O Patanjali Muni, I give prostrations to you for showing us such a noble way to remove these dirt.”

Some people ask me whether a Vedantin can take meat and fish, non-vegetarian food.

According to our *sastras*, literally, meat eating is not absolute taboo. It was the custom of many Hindus to eat fleshy food in ancient days. Vegetarianism was introduced in this country to a great extent by the influence of Jainism and in this, Jainism has taught us something very good.

First of all, fleshy food (most of them) creates *rajas* in you. Secondly, for proper nutrition, nourishment and health, non-vegetarian food is not necessary. We can do without them. Thirdly, if you go and see a slaughter house and see how the animals are slaughtered and if you know how an animal that is dragged to the slaughter house resists it by piteous heart-rending cries, you will never feel like eating flesh again. Vegetarianism is more aesthetic than religious. We are advised by the *sastras* to take to vegetarianism as one of the sure means that will help the spiritual development of the individual. It is not suggested as a religious doctrine to be accepted by the society as a whole.

In the modern times, when due to the advancement of scientific methods of agriculture and vegetable far-

ming, numerous vegetables (many 'English' vegetables are produced in India now, in addition to our own) are grown and stored, the necessity to take to non-vegetarian food is not at all there. Non-vegetarianism is more the result of the craving of the tongue now than a requirement of life. Moreover, as Swami Vivekananda has put it, the vegetarianism of the Hindus is not like the "non-meat-eatism" of the Westerners. We were mostly non-vegetarians once, but gave it up later knowing the worth and value of vegetarianism. We evolved in this respect by long experience.

But see the picture these days. Our youngsters take to meat-eating as a fashion. - What their forefathers perfected and attained through centuries of toil and effort, is being thrown to the winds by their modern thoughtless descendants. O meat-eating youngsters, beware! you are killing your spiritual potentiality by that practice.

Just because vegetarianism was not completely a *sanatana dharmic* doctrine, you need not think that taking meat is good. If you are a non-vegetarian, you need not also give up meat suddenly, but take as little of it and as infrequently as possible. Do not be attached to it. Then the habit will slowly leave you.

Thus when you come to *satvik* food and start meditating sincerely, you become a better man. Many people have another doubt. They think that by meditating at night they will lose their sleep and will not feel fresh in the morning. But actually, if you meditate for two hours, the physical body will have as much repose as will be had by four hours of sleeping. Meditation is such a tranquilliser, it gives a massage to our nerves, mind and

physical body. So do not think that you will lose sleep by meditating at night. Have *Brahma bhavana* and start meditating without further delay, with sincerity. You will become a much better man advancing in every walk of life. What is more, you will almost rush towards realisation without difficulty. The progress will be quick, without any botheration or difficulty. Even old persons can meditate and realise. It is no doubt a bit difficult for them, but if done with sincerity and application, they can end the cycle of births and deaths. Even if they cannot end the cycle in this very life, the meditation they do will not be wasted, for in their next life they will certainly be able to realise. Krishna says in the Gita:

एषा ब्राह्मी स्थितिः पार्थ नैनां प्राप्य विमुह्यति ।

स्थित्वाऽस्यामन्तकालेऽपि ब्रह्मनिर्वाणमृच्छति ॥

Eshaa Braahmee sthitih Paartha

Nainaam praapya vimuhyati,

Sthitvaasyaamantakaalepi

Brahmanirvaganamrichchhati.

“Even in old age, if a man can remain established in his Self, he goes beyond births and deaths and attains Immortality.”

We come next to *pranayama*:

चित्तादिसर्वभावेषु ब्रह्मत्वेनैव भावनात् ।

निरोधः सर्ववृत्तीनां प्राणायामः स उच्यते ॥

Chittadisarvabhaaveshu Brahmatwenaiva bhaavanaat,

Nirodhah sarvavritteenaam praanaayaamah sa uchyate,

Pranayama is not the ordinary *pranayama* we usually understand by the term (i.e. control of breath). The physical *pranayama* is only an aid to control the thoughts to a certain extent. It does not directly lead you to *jnana*. For example, a crocodile can do *pranayama* excellently; it can hold its breath for a long time. After taking in air once, it goes under water and remains there for hours before surfacing again. But, does it have *jnana*? *Pranayama* of *Brahma vidya* is a higher process of arresting your thoughts. This is done by the restraint of all the modifications of the mind by regarding all the mental states (like *chitta*, *mana* etc.) as Brahman alone. *Chitta* includes the mind and the intellect; *buddhi* + *manah* = *chitta*. It is defined as that which has sprouted upon the Pure Consciousness—*chidāḥ idam chittam*. In this higher type of *pranayama*, you learn to view your different mental states as nothing but emanations upon the Pure Consciousness (Brahman). Ordinarily the mind goes on harbouring useless thoughts and imaginations and we get caught up in them to such an extent that we lose our peace of mind. A young wife imagines that after her death, her husband would marry again and her children would be ill-treated and so on. She goes on imagining thus and faces a nightmare. *Sankalpas* are at the root of such thoughts. The reason for the thoughts to sprout out is *raga* and *dwesha*. *Raga* and *dwesha* are to be got rid of; such useless imaginations are to be avoided. When the mind comes out, reason thus: “Who am I? Am I the mind? No. I am not the mind. I am the *sakshi*, Pure Consciousness, *Soham*.” Thus the undesirable thought will have no time to develop, to issue forth. Automatic cessation of the *vruttis* will take place. This is real *pranayama*. There was once a milkmaid who had one buffalo,

She used to carry on her head pots of milk and buttermilk to the town daily and sell. One day, on the way to the town, she started thinking thus: "I will go on selling milk and save four annas a day. Next month I will save eight annas a day. In about a year I will have Rs. 100/- with which I will purchase two buffaloes. I will then be able to save more by sale of milk and I will construct a building. I will purchase gold ornaments for myself and my daughters. I will have a radio, sofa-set, etc. When I will be sitting on the sofa, my neighbour will come and ask me: "O Lakshmi, I am in difficulty, please lend me Rs. 5/-. I will not reply her but shake my head and nod 'No No'." She was so much carried away by the thought, that she shook her head and the pots of milk and buttermilk on her head fell down and broke!

Many of us indulge in such useless thoughts and waste our lives. Everybody including even a beggar imagines that he will be a *kubera*. Any mother thinks her son will get a highly paid post, buy a car, etc. Instead of these useless imaginations, we should bring in the *Brahma bhavana*, whenever the mind starts going out. The mind will then stop. This one thought '*Soham*' is sufficient to practise *yama*, *niyama*, *asana*, *pranayama*, *pratyahara*, and all else besides.

While doing *anusandhana*, when moving in the world or while doing *nididhyasana* in a room, practise the '*Soham*' *bhava* or *akandakaravritti*. Not only all external thoughts, but even internal thoughts will cease coming and affecting you. *Pranayama* is that state where the external world does not act upon you.

Sankara describes '*pranayama*' more elaborately in the next two *slokas*:

निषेधनं प्रपञ्चस्य रेचकाख्यः समीरणः ।

ब्रह्मैवास्मीति या वृत्तिः पूरको वायुरीरितः ॥

ततस्तद्वृत्तिनैश्चल्यं कुम्भकः प्राणसंयमः ।

अयं चापि प्रबुद्धानां अज्ञानां घ्राणपीडनम् ॥

Nishedhanam prapanchasya rechakaakhyah sameeranaah,

Brahmaivaasmeeti yaa vrittih poorako vaayureeritah.

Tatastadvrittinaischalyam kumbhakah praanasamyamah,

Ayam chaapi prabuddhaanam ajnaanaam ghraanapeedanam.

The *prapancha bodha* is to be given up. Then the clinging tendency and excessive attachment of the mind will go away. In ordinary *pranayama*, taking in the breath is called 'pooraka', retaining the breath is called 'kumbhaka'. In *Brahma vidya*, 'pooraka' is taking in the thought 'I am Brahman' and 'kumbhaka' is where the mind is pregnant with the thought, 'I am Brahman', i.e. where this thought is retained and dwelt upon, and 'rechaka' is throwing away the *prapancha bodha*. This *pranayama* is only for those whose intellect is awakened. It is not for *ajnanis* (the ignorant). The '*pranayama*' of manipulating the nose is for *ajnanis*. *Yama*, *niyama* and *pranayama* need not be practised one by one. These can be practised simultaneously.

Here is only an assessment of the physical *pranayama* from the highest spiritual level and not condemnation. It has its own unique effect on the body and mind.

Pratyahara:

विषयेष्वात्मतां दृष्ट्वा मनसश्चितिमज्जनम् ।

प्रत्याहारः स विज्ञेयोऽभ्यसनीयो मुमुक्षुभिः ॥

*Vishayeshwaatmataam drishtwaa manasaschiti majjanam,
Pratyaaahaarah sa vijneyobhyasaneeyo mumukshubhih.*

“The *mumukshus* (people desirous of attaining *Mukti*) should practise *pratyahara* by withdrawing the senses from sense objects or *vishayas*, just like a tortoise withdrawing itself into the shell, seeing nothing except their own Self in them.”

When you go on practising *anusandhana* and *nididhyasana*, a stage will come, when whoever stands in front of you—be it a woman, a man, a child, a friend or an enemy—you will have the natural *bhava* that they are *Brahman*. Wherever the mind goes, you will start finding the one Infinite *Brahman*. When you go on practising, it will become so natural that the mind will refuse to stay out; will come back to its origin and sink in the inner consciousness. Only in the initial stages will you have to struggle with the mind. Afterwards, it becomes easy. Whenever anybody asks you a question the reply will come intuitively. There will be no need to cogitate or think about it. After answering you will keep quiet.

The next stage is *Dharana*:

यत्र यत्र मनो याति ब्रह्मणस्तत्र दर्शनात् ।

मनसो धारणं चैव धारणा सा परा मता ॥

*Yatra yatra mano yaati Brahmanastattra darsanaat,
Manaso dhaaranam chaiva dhaaranaa saa paraa mataa.*

The next step will be that when you sit and meditate and the mind starts wavering you need not struggle to control the mind. When the *Soham bhava* is developed, the mind will automatically stop. Reason thus: “O

mind, where are you going? You are the *Brahman*. Wherever you go, it is but *Brahman* there, *Soham*." You will start having this attitude and when this is developed the mind will automatically stop going out at all.

Dhyana:

ब्रह्मैवास्मीति सद्वृत्त्या निरालम्बतया स्थितिः ।

ध्यानशब्देन विख्याता परमानन्ददायिनी ॥

Brahmaivaasmeeti sadvrittyaa niraalambatayaa sthithi,

Dhyaanasabdena vikhyaataa paramaanandadaayinee.

When *dhyana* becomes perfect, when the going-out of the mind is stopped to a certain extent, a stage will come when the other thoughts will die away like mist disappearing before the rays of the morning Sun. The mind will become lighter and lighter and float like a piece of cotton. '*Niralamba*' means independent. The mind will just be suspended. The mind will be so light that it will be almost absent. Even the *Soham vritti* will disappear. Many people mistake it for sleep and regret about it. This is a state between waking and *samadhi*. There is no need for any regrets. It looks like *soonya*, nothingness, yet you will have a little consciousness in it. This suspended state of the mind gives man great joy.

Sankara says in his *Atma Bodha*:

अरुणेनेव बोधेन पूर्वं सन्तमसे हृते ।

तत आविर्भवेदात्मा स्वयमेवांशुमानिव ॥

Aruneneva bodhena poorvam santamase hrite,

Tata aavirbhavet Aatmaa swayamevaamsumaniva.

Just before daybreak, a beautiful red colour illumines the eastern horizon. In this twilight of the dawn, you can see, walk, etc., as most of the darkness would have gone. Before you attain *jnana*, you would have reached such a state of meditation that the *Soham vritti* you are practising would have driven away all other thoughts and itself would have almost died and you will be in a state between sleep and waking state, something like *arunodaya*. You will remain in that state until your *vasanas* are exhausted. That is why I say, *dhyana* alone will not do. You will have to cultivate *samabhava* also. Practise *samabhava* and dwell upon the inner *sakshi*. This two-pronged effort will quicken the oncoming of the awakened state. You will have sudden illumination, when thoughts would have ceased and there would be Pure Awareness or Pure Consciousness. This is *jnana samadhi*. You will be in the Self, nay, the very Self. (*Arunodaya* is the morning twilight.)

Samadhi:

निर्विकारतया वृत्त्या ब्रह्माकारतया पुनः ।

वृत्तिविस्मरणं सम्यक् समाधिर्ज्ञानसंज्ञकः ॥

*Nirvikaratayaa vrittayaa Brahmaakaaratayaa punah,
Vrittivismaranam samyak samaadhirjnaanasantakah.*

In the *dhyana* stage, the time between two thoughts is lengthened. If you go on practising it, one day the *vrittis* will die out and you will have the Awakened Consciousness. What it is, you will know when you experience it. I cannot explain it, as it is an inner experience. When you realise, you will know it. You cannot miss it. It will be very illumining and enlightening. I used to ask my *gurudev* what the experience of *samadhi* would be like and whether I would understand it. My *gurudev* replied:

“Your question has as much sense as a young pregnant girl telling her mother to wake her up at the time of delivery! She will be having such a pain that she would wake up all the persons in the building by her cries. When you attain the ‘*samadhi*’ state, you will experience such transcendental bliss that you cannot miss it or mistake it to be something else.

But *sadhana* is not over even then (i.e. on attaining *jnana samadhi* once). Having *samadhi* is an easy process. The difficult process is thereafter. This *jnana samadhi* or being in the Pure Consciousness or *atma jnana* has to end in *Brahma jnana*. Buddhists and some *yogis* can conceive of only *samadhi*. Vedantins carried this further to its logical conclusion. If *samadhi* is something that comes and goes, it is not permanent. It ought not to be stopped there. You should practise it to such a great extent or for such a long time, that the mind will be having no more *raga* and *dwesha*, whether in the wakeful or dreaming states. You must be able to see the one Infinite Principle everywhere.

देहाभिमाने गलिते विज्ञाते परमात्मनि ।

यत्र यत्र मनो याति तत्र तत्र समाधयः ॥

Dehaabhimaane galite vijnaate Paramaatmani,

Yatra yatra mano yaati tatra tatra samaadhayah.

A stage will come, as you keep on practising *samadhi*, when the body consciousness will go away completely. Even in the ordinary level of consciousness you will not feel I am Krishna or I am Ram—but all is *Brahman*. What experience you had in the *samadhi*, upon that Pure Consciousness the mind comes, and when the mind comes and in consequence the world comes, you will know that

the mind and world experiences are sprouts upon that and are themselves of the nature of Pure Consciousness. The *Brahma sthiti* or *viswatma bhava* develops, and the *prapancha bodha* goes away, for you know that the universe itself is an emanation on that Infinite. By repeated *samadhi*, you start having this knowledge perfectly, absolutely, thoroughly and most effectively. Wherever your senses go or your thoughts go, you start having that consciousness. There won't be any difficulty for you to recede into the Pure Consciousness. Whatever you do, you will have the *Brahma sthiti*. You do not see anything excepting *Brahman*. If you see a man in front, the man-picture may be there, but you see only the Divine Consciousness in and through him. This is called also *Sahaja state*.

पुंस्वानुपुंस्वविषयेक्षणतत्परोपि ब्रह्मावलोकनधियं न जहाति योगी ।
संगीतताललयवाद्यवशंगतापि मौलिस्थकुम्भपरिरक्षणवीर्नटीव ॥

Pumkhaanupumkhavishayekshanatatparopi
Brahmaavalokanadhiyam na jahaati yogi,
Sangeetataalalayavaadyavasamgataapi
Maulisthakumbhaparirakshanadheernateeva.

Thereafter, having attained that state of *Brahma jnana* your body and mind may act in the world like a child. Your *indriyas* may act or go out, your mind may act or go out. A simile is given in the above *sloka*: When arrows are shot by an expert archer like Sri Rama or Arjuna, in quick succession, only the broader and feathered parts of the arrows are visible and the finer, front parts, would not be visible. In such quick succession the mind of a *jnani* may go out to the external objects, yet the more subtle part of it dwells on the *Brahmic* awareness. Also only the

gross actions of a *jnani* will be visible, but the subtle state will not be visible to others. A dancer dancing to the accompaniment of enchanting music, with a pot on her head, makes gestures and postures continuously. One part of her mind is taking care of the pot on the head, in spite of the absorption of her body and mind in the dance. Similarly having been in the *Brahma sithi*, that consciousness will never leave a *jnani*, although he may be acting in the world. This state is called *Brahma jnana* and *Brahma jnana* is not *samadhi*. The *loka bodha*, *prapancha bodha* and *deha bodha* (the world and the body consciousness) go away and whatever you see or do, the awareness that it is all *Brahman*, abides. *Raga*, *dwesha* and *bhaya* go away completely, for only when you have the dualistic *bodha* will you have attraction and repulsion. These are extinct now. *Samadhi abhyasa* is for this *Brahma jnana* state where man is no more deluded. This is called *sahaja samadhi*, *jivanmukta avastha* or *sthitadhi avastha*. Sankara says: "the aspirant should carefully practise meditation that reveals his natural (original) Bliss until, being under his full control, the *samadhi state* arises spontaneously in an instant, when wanted." In the next *sloka*:

इमञ्चाकृत्रिमानन्दं तावत् साधु समभ्यसेत् ।

वश्यो यावत् क्षणात् पुंसः प्रयुक्तः संभवेत् स्वयम् ॥

Imanchaakritrimaanandam taavat saadhu samabhyaset,

Vasyo yaavat kshanaat pumsah prayuktah sambhavet svayam.

Akritrimanandam means pure original (uncreated) *ananda*. How is it original? Any *ananda* we get because of our association with the external objects is artificial in so far as it is created by that; anything artificial will be

unreal and impermanent. But this *ananda* of *Brahma jnana* is of our very innate being and is not got from external objects. If we identify with this, it will never decay or go away. This original *ananda* you must go on practising until it becomes your real nature. As you go on practising meditation, you will reach the *samadhi* state more frequently and you will come to a state where it (*samadhi*) arises spontaneously, in an instant, when wanted. You will have to exert for it only so much as for closing and opening your eyes. In a fraction of a second, you should be able to merge in the Pure Consciousness. It must become so natural. Until coming to such a state, you must go on practising *samadhi*. When you reach that state, your personality becomes Pure Consciousness itself.

ततः साधननिर्मुक्तः सिद्धो भवति योगिराट् ।
तत्स्वरूपं न चैतस्य विषयो मनसो गिराम् ॥

Tatah saadhananirmuktah siddho bhavati yogiraat,
Tatswaroopam na chaitasya vishayo manaso giraam.

Then and only then is your *sadhana* (practice) complete. Your progress towards the Ultimate Reality is over and you have no need to do *sadhana* any more. It is just as when you want to go to a certain place, you have to walk to that place. Once you reach that place, the walking is over. So also, the process of *sadhana* is over to the *yogi* who can have *samadhi* at will. He becomes a *siddha*; a king among *yogis*.

Outwardly he may be the same man, but inwardly he is not the same. Even those near him cannot conceive of his real nature. His personality gets detached from the body, mind and intellect-level to that of the Soul, the

Pure Consciousness. What it will be like cannot be described by words.

Internally, his whole nature is transformed; enlightened. His personality is lit by the consciousness that he is the unborn, non-dying, ever-present *satchidananda swaroopa*. The ordinary man cannot examine him and see whether he is a real *jnani* or not, for he is above the ordinary mortal's comprehension. Nor does a *siddha* care a bit whether he is considered a *jnani* or not. If at all he tries to enlighten the people by pointing out to them the goal and the path, he does so, not for fame or name, but only out of the joy, *ananda*, that is overflowing in him. He wants to share the joy with others. In *Yogavasishtha*, Vasishtha describes his own state of *sahaja samadhi* thus:

कर्तव्यमस्ति न ममेह हि किञ्चिदेव
 स्थातव्यमित्यतिमनाः भुवि संस्थितोस्मि ।
 संशान्तया सततसुप्तधियैव वृत्त्या
 कार्यं करोमि न च किञ्चिदहं करोमि ॥

Kartavyamasti na mameha hi kinchideva

Sthaatavyamityatimanaah bhuvi samsthitosmi,

Samsaantayaa satatasuptadhiyaiva vrittyaa

Kaaryam karomi na cha kinchidaham karomi.

“O Rama, I and the Infinite Reality are one. To me there is no *kartavya*, duty, in this world. You may ask why I then remain in this world. Whether I remain or do not remain, whether the body remains or not, I do not worry about it. My mind is completely *santa*, peaceful. Just as a man who is fast asleep is not subject to

the onslaughts of *sukha* and *dukkha* (happiness and unhappiness), which a man in the waking state experiences, similarly, though I remain in this wakeful state, *sukha* and *dukkha* do not afflict me. It is as though I were asleep, as far as *sukha* and *dukkha* are concerned. I am awake but the mind has transcended *sukha* and *dukkha*. I am in such an equipoised state that whatever comes by my way, I spontaneously react. Whatever circumstances come before me, I respond and react spontaneously. I have no duty consciousness. As a *sakshi*, I witness all and remain inactive. I stay in the world like this, because I know that life here would go on till the body falls. But I live, *atimanah*, transcending the mind."

So, go on practising meditation and do not stop the *sadhana* even when you attain *samadhi* for the first time. You must reach such a state that you can enter into and merge in the Pure Consciousness without any difficulty. In a second, you must be able to enter *samadhi*. Then your true self will not be the physical, mental or intellectual personailty but the Eternal Transcendental Reality. Even if someone asks you, "When did you attain Realisation?", it will seem a meaningless question, because you will have realised that you were That always, you are That now and you will be That always. So to attain the inexpressible *ananda* of that state, change your life completely. Change your mode of thinking, mode of behaviour, and mode of life. Determine that your aim in life is Realisation and Realisation alone.

Sankara concludes his discussion on *raja yoga* with—

एभिरंगैः समायुक्तो राजयोग उदाहृतः ।

किञ्चित्पक्वकषायाणां हठयोगेन संयुतः ॥

*Ebhirangaih samaayukto Raajayoga udaahritah,
Kimchitpakvakashaayaanaam hathayogena samyutah.*

These eight steps are called *raja yoga*—the king of science—*Brahma vidya*. Science means the process of knowing truth. This is a process in which you become one with truth. You do not perceive or understand the truth objectively, but realise it subjectively. Only those who are sufficiently developed, matured spiritually, have control over their senses and have discriminative understanding and can follow *raja yoga* successfully, because it is a high and subtle inner process.

What about those who are not completely free from worldly desires, whose *vasāṇas*, *raga* and *dwesha* are not exhausted or reduced? Have they no hope? Yes, they have. *Hatha yoga* will be of help to them here. We may have certain innate tendencies, hidden traits, which are not completely removed. *Hatha yoga* techniques of *asana* and *pranayama* will help us here, because they have a certain purificatory effect on us. Do not misunderstand me. By *hatha yoga* alone you can never attain *jnana*, but it does have a purificatory effect which will help you in pursuing the path of *Brahma vidya*. People generally think that by performing *yagas* and *yajnas* their impurities are removed. They do not know that *hatha yoga* has a thousand times more effect than *yagas* and *yajnas* in cleansing the dirt of the body and mind. By taking *asanas*, doing *pranayama* etc. the muscles and the physical organs are exercised in such a way, that the body has a proper rhythmic development. The food you take is not wasted but is equitably distributed to all the parts. In the other (Western) type of exercises, as long as you continue doing them, you will

be well built and shaped. But once you stop doing them, you again become pot-bellied. In *yogasanas*, not only the muscles but the *pranic nerves*, the blood vessels etc. are all toned up. The process is an elongation of the muscles and not contraction. Each *asana* has its own specific effect. *Mayurasana* removes the excess fat from the stomach and cures you of dysentery and dyspepsia. By doing *matsya asana*, you will be free from bronchitis, asthma and other heart and lung troubles. In *sirshasana* the brain cells are cleanly washed. The thyroid glands, bowels, diaphragm and other inner organs are all invigorated, exercised and toned up.

Many people think practising *asanas* is dangerous. It is only as dangerous as walking in a quiet street. In building up health, it is the inner energy and strength that matter and not the external muscles. For developing the inner energy there is no other exercise like *yogasanas*. It strengthens the nerves and it makes the muscles flexible and strong. If you work for hours and then do *sirshasana* for ten minutes, all your fatigue disappears. The body and the brain feel fresh. These are just a few of the physical benefits you derive from *yogasanas*. Psychologically, *yogasanas* drive away your passions to a great extent. So, Sankara says, the best way for *rajasik* and *tamasic* people, who cannot control their passions, *raga* and *dwesha* and their senses, is to combine *hatha yoga* (*yogasanas* and *pranayama*) with *Brahma vidya*. By *hatha yoga* alone we cannot attain enlightenment. For pursuing *Brahma vidya*, we must have a good deal of ethical perfection, inner purity and control over our senses, which most of us do not have. So the best way for the majority of us is a combination of *hatha yoga* and *Brahma vidya*.

Chapter 15

HINDRANCES TO REALISATION

After explaining the various steps to Realisation, Sankara goes on pointing out the probable hindrances to one's progress. Some may be overcome by sleep, some by the onrush of so many thoughts and some by the pull of the flesh. They will try to conquer the flesh, but the flesh will try to conquer them.

The hindrances are:

समाधौ क्रियमाणे तु विघ्नान्यायान्ति वै बलात् ।

अनुसन्धानराहित्यमालस्यं भोगलालसम् ॥

लयस्तमश्च विक्षेपो रसास्वादश्च शून्यता ।

एवं यद्विघ्नबाहुल्यं त्याज्यं ब्रह्मविदा शनैः ॥

Samaadhau kriyamaane tu vighnaanyaayaanti vai balaat,

Anusandhaanaraahityamaalasyam bhogalaalasam.

Layastamascha vikshepo rasaasvaadascha soonyataa,

Evam yadvighnabaahulyam tyaaajyam Brahmaavidaa sanaih.

(i) *Anusandhana rahitya*: This means, 'failure to meditate'. You go on meditating for a week or two. Then one day you just forget to meditate. A friend may call you for a chat or cinema. You will go on talking and your mind will get absorbed in the talk. You will cleanly, forget the discipline that you had brought about

in the preceding two weeks. The old nature is so strong that the new nature you are cultivating will be pushed off.

What is the remedy?

Discipline yourself. Make a firm determination that you will rise up early in the morning and meditate for one hour at least. You will have to be firm with yourself, particularly in the early stages of *sadhana*, because, as you go on meditating, your mind will become comparatively free of thoughts and this will give you joy in direct proportion. You will know that this is a joy that can be had, not from the external *vishayas*, but only by the subjective sinking, when you associate yourself with the true Inner Personality. Conscious of this, your tendency to go out seeking pleasure, will automatically thin out without any effort. Thereafter you will find it more natural to meditate than to engage yourself in useless actions, which were formerly giving you joy.

Keeping up meditation with determination in the initial stages is very necessary and essential, because if you once lapse, then you will never take it up seriously again. You will thus be staying on in the *manana* stage. India came down spiritually and morally because in spite of there being a great many learned pundits and scholars, there were very few who followed their *manana* (intellection stage) by *nididhyasana* and realised the Supreme. They threw off the kernel and preserved the shell. What is the use of mere intellection without actively striving for *Mukti*?

Sankara says of such pundits:

वाग्वैखरी शब्दझरी शास्त्रव्याख्यानकौशलम् ।

वैदुष्यं विदुषां तद्वत् भुक्तये न तु मुक्तये ॥

*Vaagvaikharee sabdajharee saastravyaakhyaanakausalam,
Vaidushyam vidushaam tadvat bhuktaye na tu muktaye.*

“Your capacity to explain beautifully the *sastras*; your capacity to utter so many difficult passages and charm the other men; your capacity to twist and turn texts and scriptures this way and that way giving different shades of meaning – these skills are only for enthralling the audience and for representing yourself as “a wonder”. Such scholarship is not for *Mukti*, Enlightenment, but only for *bhukti* i.e. for enjoying, for getting money, filling the stomach by selling Vedanta.”

Practical Vedanta had almost become extinct in the period preceding Sankara, because for the learned people religion was a vested interest. They told the ignorant masses: “You just believe in me. I shall give you everything you need.” Thus, without trying to enlighten the people with real knowledge, they prescribed to them the various religious rites, *poojas*, etc. Thus we came to practise ritualistic religion without ethical perfection. Let not history be allowed to repeat. So, do not stop at the *manana* stage, but fulfil it by meditation. Do not be careless and forget to meditate.

(ii) *Alasya*—Laziness or lethargy: You have set the alarm clock at 5 o'clock to get up and meditate. But when it rings, you put it off (silence it) and think, “I will just sleep for another five minutes.” You pull up the blankets and when next you wake up, it is 6-30 a. m. Here, it is not forgetfulness but sheer laziness that has prevented you from meditating. Do not give way to it. When the alarm clock strikes, at once get up. The flesh is such that it will pull you down if you show even the slightest

weakness. Just as in food, what is good for the tongue is not good for the stomach, so also here, what is pleasant for the body, is not good for the real personality. Laziness will not help you in awakening you to your true nature. *satchidananda*. Exercise firm control over your own body.

Lethargy may take another form. A friend of yours has come and is talking to you. You know it is time for meditation, but you are not feeling inclined to meditate, partly out of laziness and partly because you find the talk more interesting than meditation! You console yourself with the lame excuse: "O! how can I ask my friend to go away at this time? Will it not be rude of me?" Do not hide under such false excuses. Tell your friend plainly that you have to observe certain religious disciplines; so would he please go away and come again at a different time of the day? If the friend is a true one, he will understand your feelings and take leave of you without any ill-feelings. If he is not a true friend, he may get offended and think you have insulted him and go off in a huff. Do not feel sorry for it, because the sooner you are rid of such friends, the better you would be. You may think: "Will it not be selfishness on my part?" No, it will not be. For, after all what is life for?

आत्मनो मोक्षार्थं जगद्धिताय च ।

Atmano mokshaartham jagaddhitaaya cha.

"It is to perfect your life to become a *Mukta* and to be of benefit to the world."

You have to perfect your life first, then only can you serve society properly. Being yourself imperfect, the service you do will also be imperfect, as there will be a

selfish content in your service. When you have perfected yourself and have attained Realisation, then alone can you serve the world best. Then you will impart your very perfection and goodness to others. Selfless service will issue forth spontaneously from you. Service can also be done as a *karma yogi*, in the form of *sadhana*. But it will not be as perfect as the service rendered by a realised person. So, do not think you can do real good to the world before becoming perfect yourself. This is exactly what we are not doing. Being corrupt, dishonest and crooked ourselves, we want to do "social service." How senseless! We think we are civilised and criticise the cannibals who kill other human beings for food. At least, the cannibals kill only a single person or at the most a few to appease their hunger, but, we, the so-called civilised people, kill in thousands and millions.

So, do not hide behind the lame excuse that "I am doing social service and so have no time for meditation." Become perfect yourself first. Shake off your lethargy by using your will power.

What is the real will power? Krishna says:

धृत्या यया धारयते मनःप्राणेन्द्रियक्रियाः ।

योगेनाऽव्यभिचारिण्या धृतिः सा पार्थ सात्त्विकी ॥

*Dhrityaa yayaa dhaarayate manahpraanendriyakriyaah,
Yogenaavyabhichaarinyaa dhritih saa Paartha saattvikee.*

The best type of will-power is that in which you attune yourself to the Infinite, non-changing, non-perishing *Satchidananda* and use that strength and will-power to control the actions of your mind, senses and the vital air, *prana*, which otherwise will drag you to the sense-world.

That will-power alone is real. Use that will-power to conquer your lethargy.

(iii) *Bhoga-lalasam*—(desire and craving for sensuous pleasures, relating to all the five sense organs).

Even if you do not forget to meditate and are also free from laziness, the desire for sense pleasures may hinder your meditation. This is but natural. Since you are trying to control your senses, the senses in turn will try to control you. They will not give up without a last-ditch fight. Instead of suppressing your senses, sublimate your thoughts, by dwelling on the *soham bhavana*, more and more. Do not curse yourself and think that you are not fit for *sadhana*. Anyone who is sincere enough and who has intelligence to understand the rudiments of Vedanta is fit for *Brahma vidya*. If you are not able to control your sense cravings, it only means that you have to put in more determined effort. Will-power and the *bodha*, "I am that non-changing, ever-present, actionless witness within, *Soham*" are your sole refuge.

Many people say evasively that they are just not mature enough and it is no use trying to control the senses. It is absurd. Do not think maturity will drop on you from the heavens. Maturity is not that state of old age when your senses are powerless. You have to use your *paurusha* to attain maturity, by controlling your sense organs. Every moment you control them, every moment you win over your emotions and passionate desires, understand you are becoming progressively a veritable God, an enlightened being. If the world has had any good from anybody, it has been from such people. The visible mark of any saint, any true religious leader, is that the flesh cannot drag him.

Develop this strong and great virtue. Be not a slave of the flesh. Do not grieve over your failings, but dwell on the opposite virtue. The best of all virtues and the antidote for all vices and low feelings, is the dwelling on the "I am that Infinite Being, Pure Existence, Pure Consciousness, Pure Bliss" thought. All virtues will be by-products of this *bodha*.

(iv) *Laya* or *Jadasamadhi*: There are a few subtle, astral obstructions to your progress. One of them is *laya*. Here, as you go on meditating, your thoughts will cease and you will reach a state just like sleep but not exactly sleep. The mind stops but is covered by darkness as in a chloroform state. Mind has three aspects or capacities: (i) Capacity to remember; (ii) Capacity to think of the things of the present moment and also of future i. e. *sankalpas* etc. and (iii) Capacity to remove consciousness from itself—cover itself with darkness, i. e. to forget. In short it has a capacity to project out thoughts and withdraw them into itself. *Laya* or *jada samadhi* is a state in which, when you go on meditating, you will just merge in unconsciousness. After waking, if you look in the mirror, your face will be flushed, your eyes will be bloodshot. The body will be warm. You will feel completely energised and alert. When you get up from sleep you feel lethargic. But when you get up from *jadasamadhi*, you will feel unusually energised and rejuvenated. Not only that, you are in tune with the Cosmic Prana, so much so, that any mild disease you have is automatically cured when you have repeated experiences of it. If you are too fat, you will become thinner and healthier. If you are a person who eats too much or is fond of *unsatvik* food, you will have dysentery and your system will get rid of the excess

or the unhealthy thing. When you start meditation, you will have to make your food *satvik*. Otherwise, when the thought realm changes and the body retains the old type of *unsatvik* nutrition, there would be a psycho-physical disharmony. So, the body will adjust itself to the mind and thoughts and the consequence would be dysentery or dyspepsia. This is the lot of many *sadhakas* who live in crowded cities and those who eat in hotels and restaurants. Unless the food you take is *satvik* and in moderate quantities, you will suffer the punishment of dysentery. With the right type of food and regular meditation, the body becomes wiry, clean, healthy, and well-shaped. Besides these bodily improvements, you will experience a type of inner joy.

Notwithstanding all these, *jadasamadhi* is a hindrance to your progress. Many people think, because of the joy and energisation they derive from *jadasamadhi*, that it is the real *samadhi* state. It is not so. The joy you have here is not even a fraction of the joy you will experience when you attain true *samadhi*. How to transcend and go beyond this state? The *jadasamadhi* will persist until you become almost entirely free of *raga-dwesha*. If you have too much clinging to the world, you will not transcend the *jadasamadhi* state. So purify yourself physically and mentally. Cultivate *samabhava*, get rid of *raga-dwesha*, view *sukha* and *dukkha* as a witness (*sakshi*) without affectation. Then *jadasamadhi* or *laya* will not obstruct your path.

(v) *Tama*—Sleep: Many people are overcome by sleep as soon as they start meditation. If you lie down and meditate, do not keep a pillow under your head,

because it will massage your head and neck and send you to sleep. Take food early at night, at least three hours before you sit or lie down to meditate. Be careful about the quantity and the type of food you take, especially at night. Take light, *satvik* food. Do not think you will become emaciated. Most of the diseases like diabetes and blood pressure will, in fact, be cured if you take light, *satvik* food, early in the night. Late eating and stomach-loading harm our digestive system. You sleep soundly at night but your poor stomach and intestines are kept busy throughout the night digesting the enormous quantity of indigestible food that you have stuffed yourself with. Have pity on your stomach and give it some rest. It is also necessary for you to have some form of physical exercise daily to have good digestion. If you follow these instructions you will have good health and a wiry body. You will not be overcome by *tama*, sleep, then.

(vi) *Vikshepa*: You are meditating regularly. You happen to mention this to a friend of yours, who says: "O you are meditating? I have heard that such and such a *yogi* has attained mystic powers by meditation. He can cure any disease merely by a look or touch. You can get such supernatural powers by meditation. Have you attained any such powers so far?" On hearing this your mind gets disturbed and diverted. You have a feeling: "How wonderful will it be to possess such powers? I am at present earning Rs. 500/- a month and I want to get at least Rs. 1,000/- per month. Will meditation help me in it?" Thus your very purpose of meditation gets changed. This diversion of your purpose in a wrong direction is called *vikshepa*. Do not go after astral powers, *siddhis* and *vibhutis* or material prosperity. When you take the name

of God and approach Him, remember what Christ said: "Seek ye the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you." Or what Krishna has said:

तेषां नित्याभियुक्तानां योगक्षेमं वहाम्यहम् ।

Teshaam nityabhiyuktaanaam yogakshemam vahaamyaham.

"I shall look after the well-being (*yogakshema*) of those who are steadfast in their *sadhana*." Try and reach that One Being, the Ultimate Reality, and all the things that are required for your worldly life will come of their own accord. When you seek any worldly thing (prosperity, wealth, etc.) with ego, the measure to which you can accomplish them is very limited. The moment you depend upon the Higher Power and work as a *karma yogi*, without attachment, clinging and craving, the work you do will bear ten times as much result as when you depend on your ego. The more you become unselfish, so much you become an instrument in the hands of God for work, which will bring *sreyas* to yourself as well as to the world.

(vii) *Rasawada*: You may get some mystic experiences while meditating. For example, if you had been attached to Krishna and had wished to have a vision of Him, the trace of that desire may still be in you. When you meditate, you may sometimes have a vision of Krishna, which will be as real as anything you see outside in the world. Some people see bright lights during meditation and think it is the ultimate illumination. If that be the real thing, you can see bright lights anywhere in a city. Seeing astral lights or the form of your *Ishta Devata*, do not get stuck up in them, thinking you are making real progress. When you see an object, it means that you are

separate and it is separate. Anything you see is also subject to change and destruction. How then can they be the Ultimate Reality? So, when you start meditation with a trace of the old emotional religion in you, such visions come and obstruct your progress. Many religious people, in spite of their sincerity and ethical perfection, get bound up here, because they start meditating without first having a clear understanding that the Ultimate Reality is nameless and formless; that it is Pure Consciousness. In all religions, there are some such *Ishta Devatas*. When people have visions of these *Ishta Devatas*, they attribute it to some supernatural or Divine manifestation and think that they have reached the Ultimate. Thus a Christian having got a vision of Christ thinks that he has reached the ultimate. A Rama *bhakta* or Krishna *bhakta*, when he gets a vision of Rama or Krishna, thinks that there is nothing more to be achieved. Each one thinks that his *Ishta Devata* alone is the Ultimate Reality and becomes bigotted and fanatic. This tasting of the joy from such astral visions is called *rasaswada*, which is a great hindrance in meditation. This can be transcended only by having a clear understanding, a perfect conception of the Ultimate Reality, which is Pure Consciousness, Pure Existence and Pure Bliss.

(viii) *Sunyata*—Nothingness:

Here the thoughts cease, the mind stops, there is absolute vacancy, a sort of emptiness but you are conscious of the emptiness or nothingness. Some of the Buddhists developed their philosophy that *sunyata* is the final or the ultimate thing to be attained. For, they could experience nothing more.

Even in *sunyata*, you get some joy. But this is not permanent and high. The moment you come back from

it, your *raga* and *dwesha* again come to the fore. Do not mistake *sunyata* for realisation—enlightenment. You have to go beyond it and reach that state where you have perfect *ananda*. *Lack of ethical perfection leads to sunyata. So, transcend it by becoming ethically perfect and attain realisation.*

These are the eight hindrances on the way to realisation.

When you go beyond them and merge in the pure Consciousness, Vedanta says:

भिद्यते हृदयग्रन्थिः छिद्यन्ते सर्वसंशयाः ।

Bhidyate hridayagranthih chhidryante sarvasamsayaah.

“The knots of the heart are broken, all doubts are dispelled; anger, jealousy, greed and selfish love will go away.” You become an embodiment of virtues. When you come to the waking state, your mind will be as pure as gold that has been melted and cooled.

These obstructions, when they come, will have to be driven off by proper analysis, knowledge, *vairagya* and *viveka*.

Sankara says:

भाववृत्त्या हि भावत्वं शून्यवृत्त्या हि शून्यता ।

ब्रह्मवृत्त्या हि पूर्णत्वं तस्मात् पूर्णत्वमभ्यसेत् ॥

Bhuavavritttyaa hi bhaavatvam soonyavritttyaa hi soonyataa,

Brahmavritttyaa hi poornatvam tasmaat poornatvamabhyaset.

Many people meditate on deities like Rama or Krishna. This is called *bhava vritti*. The mind is creating a picture and meditating on it. These people do have a sort of *samadhi* called ‘*bhava samadhi*’ in which they forget themselves and are merged in that picture created by the

mind. But it has no lasting effect because once they come out of that *samadhi*, they are the same old miserable beings. The so-called *avesa*, in which man jumps and dances thinking that God or Divine power has come in his body, is even much lower than *bhava samadhi*. Here people key up their own nervous vibrations and when under that spell, imagine themselfs to be messengers of God. This is an absurd and absolutely useless accomplishment.

Many people meditate on nothingness. They first look at a distant object, then take their eyes away and start looking at the intervening space. They then close their eyes and meditate on this *sunya*. This takes them no further than *jadasamadhi* or *sunyata*.

When you take up Vedanta, you have to outlive the orthodox religion completely. Vedanta is the cream of all religions and philosophies and it sees no distinction between a Hindu, Christian, Jew, Muslim or Buddhist. You need not also leave your religion to take to Vedanta. Only as a man you have to take it up and not as one belonging to this or that religion, because the Ultimate Reality is nameless and formless. It does not belong to any religion, caste, creed or sect. To go to That Absolute, Infinite Reality, we need have only a clear mind, discriminating capacity and determination. If you think that the Ultimate Reality is nothingness and dwell on it, you will reach a state of nothingness. This is not enlightenment. Only when you meditate on the *poornatva*, the *Soham bhava*, knowingly, can you reach the *poorna* state—*satchidananda*. Trace the *sakshi* and sink in the pure consciousness. Attain real *Jnana samadhi*.

“OM”

Chapter 16

YAGAS AND YAJNAS

To many people studying the Gita, the *slokas* 9-16 of the third chapter seem to present a riddle. Gita is a text in which all the discussion, the presentation of the philosophy, is in a sequence, in a logical and rational way. How could there be a mention of orthodox *yajnas*, especially when Krishna is stressing in the third chapter that *karma yoga* is the real *sadhana*? 'Do your duty as a *karma yogi*'. Then why has he made a seemingly dogmatic, sectarian type of discussion of the *yajna*? Sankara says: "It is *prasangikam* i.e. something uttered by the way, not having any particular reference to the subject under discussion." It is an observation made by Krishna during his talk to Arjuna and has no relevance to the theme of the Bhagavad Gita. In the Bhagavad Gita itself we find a few more references made by the way. In my lectures also I might have made references to various things which have no direct bearing on Vedanta. Sankara says: "The *slokas* beginning from "*yajnaarthaat karmanonyatra*" and ending with "*mogham Paartha sa jeevati*" i.e. from 9th to 16th, are *prasangika*. It is meant only for *ajnanis* who have no knowledge of Vedanta. To them Vedanta does not say 'stop doing orthodox *karmas*'. Instead it lets them carry on, but in a different spirit altogether. Here Krishna refers to the orthodox *karma* or *yajna* the people of those days were performing.

In the eighth *sloka*, “*niyatam kuru karma tvam*” Krishna says: “You do whatever work comes to you according to your *prakriti*, nature, and *swabhava* innate character. For, doing them without attachment to the result is much better than inaction. Your present nature and character are the outcome of the actions of your previous *janmas*, lives; you carry forward the tendencies of your previous births. You cannot avoid them, but you can sublimate them by doing work as a *karma yogi*, in the spirit of *yajna*. You cannot even maintain your body without activity.”

Hearing this, Arjuna thinks: “If by acting I aim at maintaining my body, is it not attachment to the body?” Krishna hastens to say: “No. Since the body is there, you have no right to kill it by refusing to act or by starving. You have only the right to do your duty in the spirit of *yajna*”. He says:

यज्ञार्थात्कर्मणोऽन्यत्र लोकोऽयं कर्मबन्धनः ।

तदर्थं कर्म कौन्तेय मुक्तसङ्गः समाचर ॥

*Yajnaarthaatkarmanonyatra lokoyam karmabandhanah,
Tadartham karma Kaunteya muktasangah samaachara.*

“If the people of the world do their actions in a spirit other than that of *yajna*, they will be bound by their actions.” What happens if we do our actions motivated by desire and with attachment to the result? We may accomplish some of the desired objects within our lifetime but there will be many an instance where we will not. These unfulfilled desires make us take birth after birth to get themselves fulfilled. So actions done with desire bind us by making us come again and again to work and fulfil

the desires. Our fate will be this, until we exhaust all the desires by fulfilling them.

How to snap this *karma bandha* (bondage of *karma*)? Convert every action of yours into a *yajna*. Go on performing *karma* without ego and attachment to the result. In essence, *karma yoga* is doing *karma* with the spirit of *yajna*. Let it be any action. Do it without attachment and desire, as a dedication to God. You may be a housewife, a scavenger, an office employee, a doctor or a scientist. Whatever station you are in, whatever work you have to do, in the office, at home or anywhere else, do it with sincere application, devotion and with a dedicated spirit, and throw away the attitude "I am working in the office just for the money I get at the end of the month." Instead, do the work as an offering to God. The result will come of its own accord, whether you think about it or not. If one works in that spirit, will there be duplicity and deceit in his worldly dealings? If a shopkeeper has that spirit, will he ever become a black-marketeer?

If only the spirit of *yajna* permeates our actions completely, in and out, the very action will be a direct process by which we can enter the royal road leading to *Mukti*. "*Tadartham karma*" means "*yajnartham karma*", for the sake of converting your *karma* into *yajna*. Therefore, O Arjuna, perform your actions in the spirit of *yajna*. "*Mukta sanga*" means, neither clinging to the result nor attaching oneself to the ego.

From the 10th to the 17th *slokas*, I shall give the general meaning, for they do not contain any deep meaning:

सहयज्ञाः प्रजा सृष्ट्वा पुरोवाच प्रजापतिः ।

अनेन प्रसविष्यध्वमेष वोऽस्त्विष्टकामधुक् ॥

*Sahayajnaah prajaa srishtvaa purovaacha prajaapatih,
Anena prasavishyadhvamesha vostvishtakaamadruk.*

“Right at the time of creation, having created the world and the beings along with *yajna*, Prajapati (Brahma) said: “These *yajnas* alone will fulfil all your desires, i.e. you will attain everything you want to attain through *yajnas*. You progress through this.”

देवान्भावयतानेन ते देवा भावयन्तु वः ।

परस्परं भावयन्तः श्रेयः परमवाप्स्यथ ॥

*Devaanbhaavayataanena te devaa bhaavayantu vah,
Parasparam bhaavayantah sreyah paramavaapsyatha.*

“By performing *yajna* you propitiate the *Devas*. They will in return help you (by fulfilling your desires). If you have regard for them, in their turn they will have regard for you. With the spirit of give and take (mutual regard) you will have the greatest *sreyas*, i. e. good accruing to you.” This *sreyas* does not mean *Mukti*, for the ancient *karmakandins*, who are the upholders of rituals, *yagas* and *yajnas*, did not believe in the Infinite God, *sarveswara* or in *Mukti*. They worshipped Indra, Varuna, Agni etc., who are the *Devas* mentioned here. Their highest conception of what a human being could attain was *swarga*. So *sreyas* here means only *swarga*.

Though these *yajnas* are out of date and absolutely unnecessary now, we can derive benefit by knowing the spirit in which they were performed. For example, when they offered anything to the *Devas*, they used to say, *Indra-aya idam na mama, varunaaya idam na mama*—i.e. this is for Indra or Varuna, etc., as the case may be and not for me,

na mama. This “*na mama*” (not for me) attitude, should permeate all your actions. It will root out all petty selfishness from you.

इष्टान्मोगान्हि वो देवा दास्यन्ते यज्ञभाविताः ।

तैर्दत्तानप्रदायैभ्यो यो भुङ्क्ते स्तेन एव सः ॥

Ishtaanbhogaanhi vo Devaah daasyante yaj nabhaavitaah,

Tairdattaanapradaayaibhyo yo bhungte stena eva sah.

“If you propitiate the *Devas*, they will give you whatever you want for your material welfare. Having got them, if you do not return the very same things to them through *yajnas*, again and again, you will be considered a thief or hoarder.”

यज्ञशिष्टाशिनः सन्तो मुच्यन्ते सर्वकिल्बिषैः ।

भुञ्जते ते त्वघं पापा ये पचन्त्यात्मकारणात् ॥

Yajnasishtaasinah santo muchyante sarvakilbishaih,

Bhunjate te twagham paapaa ye pachantyaatmakaraanaat.

“After giving what you have received from the *Devas* back to them through *yajnas*, if you eat or enjoy what is left over, you will be freed from all sins. Those who do not give them back, but cook and eat (enjoy) for themselves, will be eating so much of sin.”

अन्नाद्भवन्ति भूतानि पर्जन्यादन्नसंभवः ।

यज्ञाद्भवति पर्जन्यो यज्ञः कर्मसमुद्भवः ॥

Annatbhavanti bhootaani parjanyaadannasambhavah,

Yajnaatbhavati parjanya yajnah karmasamudbhavah.

“All beings come into the world and develop only by *anna*, food. Our connection with the world is just one

thing—food. We can have food only if there is rain. Vegetation will exist only if it rains. If rains are to fall properly in seasons, we have to perform *yajna*, because they are the direct cause in making rains fall. What are *yajnas*? They are only the outcome of ritualistic *karmas* given in the Vedas, i. e. *yajnas* have originated from the *karmakanda* section of the Vedas.”

कर्म ब्रह्मोद्भवं विद्धि ब्रह्माक्षरसमुद्भवम् ।

तस्मात् सर्वगतं ब्रह्म नित्यं यज्ञे प्रतिष्ठितम् ॥

*Karma Brahmodbhavam viddhi Brahmaksharasamudbhavam,
Tasmaat sarvagatam Brahma nityam yajne pratishthitam.*

“The *karmas* have originated from the Vedas. The Vedic truths were intuitively grasped by the *rishis* while in their superconscious states. They gave them out when they came back to the ordinary level of consciousness. Hence the Vedas are considered to have come from *Brahman*. Thus the Vedas have originated from the *akshara*, the Imperishable; that is, since the changeless, imperishable *Brahman* has given out the Vedas and through them the Vedic *karmas* which gave rise to *yajnas*, the *yajnas* can be considered as a part and parcel of *Brahman*. Hence, by performing *yajnas*, you will be worshipping the very *Brahman*.”

एवं प्रवर्तितं चक्रं नानुवर्तयतीह यः ।

अघायुरिन्द्रियारामो मोघं पार्थ स जीवति ॥

*Evam pravartitam chakram naanuvarthayateeha yah,
Aghaayurindriyaaramo mogham Partha sa jeevati.*

“One who does not adhere to this cyclic order of give and take (by performing *yajnas*) is an *indriyarama*—one

who lives for his physical pleasures alone. Such a man lives in vain. His life is useless, purposeless and sinful”.

If we are to believe in these verses blindly, then, rains must fall and prosperity must be there only where *yajnas* are performed. But are we finding it so? India, where people perform *yajnas*, is poverty-stricken and imports rice and wheat from America and Australia, which most probably have not even heard of *yajnas* and *yagas*, let alone performing them. Why is it so? Originally *yajnas* were prescribed only for creating in the minds of the common folk ideas of charity, unselfishness, austerity etc., whereas, we now understand from the word only the outer show of the pouring of oblations into the fire without a corresponding inner attitude and culture. That is why India is poor and famished while the Western countries are prospering. The Americans live in the spirit of *dana* and *yajna* (charity and sacrifice) quite unlike us.

In our scriptures, only three essential religious injunctions are given to us:

Yajna, dana, tapa (*Yajna* is the essential *Yajna* retaining its spirit and not ritual *yajna*). These alone will protect us and make us prosper both materially and spiritually.

There is a story in the Upanishads:

Once the *Devas, Asuras*, and human beings, not satisfied with the lives they were leading, went to *Prajapati* (Brahma) and said: “We are not having *santi* and *sama-dhana* (peace and tranquillity) in our lives. Give us some advice by which we can be happy.” Brahma kept quiet and meditated for a while. Just as he finished meditation, very large rain-bearing clouds passed over their heads and a thunder was produced. The thunder created the

sound “*da*”. Brahma told the *Devas*, *Asuras* and human beings: “The cloud has given you the answer. Go and reflect on it.”

The *Asuras* went and meditated on the sound “*da*”. They came to the conclusion: “Everything, comfort, prosperity, etc. has been provided to us. We lack nothing. Yet just for the pleasure of it, we kill others. There is no *daya*, compassion and mercy in us. So the sound “*da*” signifies *daya*, kind-heartedness.” So they started cultivating *daya* and were happy.

The *Davas* went to their abode and meditated on the letter “*da*”. They concluded: “We are so blessed that we can have anything and everything we want by the mere wish. Yet, we are not satisfied. We are after more and more sense-pleasures. What we lack is *dama* or *indriya niyamana*, control over our senses. So Brahma must have meant *damyata*, by that sound “*da*” i.e. control of the senses.”

The human beings also meditated and arrived at the conclusion: “We are very avaricious, greedy and selfish. Our hands are always stretched only to grasp something or the other for ourselves and never to give something to others. We must cultivate charity, *datta*, giving. This is what Brahma must have meant.

Among human beings themselves the *asurika* and *manushika* tendencies exist. In the same person sometimes the *daivika* tendency works, sometimes the *manushika* and sometimes the *asurika*. So, if we are to fulfil our lives and attain *Mukti*, we must be guided by the three principles of *daya*, *datta* and *damyata*; mercy, charity and control over our senses. This is real *yajna* and not pouring ghee on

the fire. *Yajna*, *dana* and *tapa* are really to be understood as *daya*, *datta* and *damyata*.

1. *Daya* or *yajna*: Rid yourself of all selfishness. Go out of your way to help others whenever they need help. Make the service of other the motto of your life. Have real sympathy and compassion for the suffering humanity. This is the greatest *yajna*. Anything you do, must be done as a dedication to human welfare.

2. *Dana* or *datta*: Have a real charitable disposition. If a hungry man comes to your door and you drive him away, understand that you are not a *sanatana dharmi*, in spite of all your *poojas* and turning of *malas*. If a starving person comes to your door asking food and you are about to take your food, go and give the food that was intended for you, even if by so doing you have to starve. This is real charity and not giving dry, stale, uneatable “*roties*” or a tattered piece of cloth, which you were about to throw away anyhow. Realising that the same Infinite Principle is pervading everywhere and dwelling in every being, your heart should be actively sensitive to others’ suffering.

There is a beautiful Sanskrit *sloka*:

सज्जनस्य हृदयं नवनीतं यद्वदन्ति कवयस्तदलीकम् ।

अन्यदेहविलसत्परितापात् सज्जनो द्रवति न नवनीतम् ॥

Sajjanasya hridayam navaneetam

yadvadanti kavayastadaleekam,

Anyadehavilasatparitaapaat

sajjano dravati na navaneetam.

The poet says here: “The poets have written that the heart of a good man is like butter. I do not agree with

them, for if butter is to melt you have to apply heat directly to it. But the heart of a good man will melt if there is heat (suffering) in another man's heart. A good man's heart is therefore finer than butter. So, those poets are wrong."

Why are America and other Western countries prospering? Because there is charity in those countries. In America there are institutions for the blind, the deaf, the crippled, etc., run on charity. Social security in the form of old age pension, unemployment pension, etc., is of a very high order.

Why has Christianity spread so much and is still spreading? Because of the *dāna* spirit in the Christians. As a religion, Christianity is dogmatic and superstitious. It comes nowhere near the high ideals and principles of Vedanta. It can appeal only to those people who are in the initial (superstitious) stages of religious development. Yet, unless there is something good in it, it could not have survived and grown. The secret of Christianity is "Charity." We people do not practise real charity but will go on performing *yajnas* and reciting the Vedas. We take pride in the Vedas. Until the Britishers came, we did not know what a modern institution was. Until the Britishers came, we did not know what a college was. That there can be social development through strong institutions, we learnt from the British. Learn charity also from the Christians and teach it to your children, charity in the form of developing our culture through strong institutions.

3. *Damyata* or *tapa*: Restraint of words, actions and of the sense organs is practically unknown in these days.

We think we are born only to indulge in sense pleasures. We do not even care for our bodily health in the pursuit of pleasures.

There is a *sloka* in the *Yogavasishtha*:

यदा यदा पाकमुपैति नूनं तदा तदेयं रतिमातनोति ।

Yadaa yadaa paakamupaiti noonam

Tadaa tadeyam ratimaatanoti.

Rama tells Vasishtah: "O! Just see how idiotic people are. The more and more they engage in sense pleasures, they think the more and more they are enjoying. They do not realise that any enjoyment is really that of Yama, the God of death."

You go on eating. The more and more you eat, understand that your capacity to eat and digest is so much reduced. It is so with any sense pleasure. Even if it be the best of pleasures, know that the more you engage in it, your capacity for that enjoyment is growing less. It dissipates, and drains your energy. While we think the enjoyment is ours, Yama says to himself happily: "His account is over. Let me go and grab him." So the real enjoyment is only Yama's.

Ramakrishna Paramahansa once said: "The boys and girls of today go to the temples not to have a *darsan* of or to praise the Lord, but for the *darsan* and praise of one another." How true it is!

We are slaves of our senses today, instead of being masters. Where have the ideals of *Brahmacharya* and mental purity gone now? Exercise control over your sense organs and teach your children to be *Brahmacharis* and *Brahmacharinis*, boys and girls who are masters of their

senses. Instead, we send them to cinemas that stir up their sense craving. This is the culture we directly and indirectly impart to our children.

Even if you cannot get out of the old nature, at least teach your children the principles of mercy, charity and control over the senses.

In these days, we understand by *yajna* only the rituals. But in ancient days there were five types of *yajnas*—*pancha mahayajna* viz. *deva yajna*, *rishi yajna*, *pitri yajna*, *manushya yajna* and *bhuta yajna*.

What are these?

1. *Deva yajna*: Any man, in whichever country he may be, until he has a Vedantic understanding, has an innate feeling that there is a power higher than himself, which has control over him and the world. People may call it by different names. Even atheists believe in such a power, only they call it “Moral Law”, “Conscience”, etc. So everyone has the feeling: “Since I believe in it (God or whatever you may call), I have got a duty towards it.” Action done in fulfilling one’s duty-consciousness towards the Higher Power is called worship or as the Vedas call it, *Deva yajna*. In Vedic times they considered Indra, Varuna, etc., (the elements of nature) as representing that power and worshipped them by *ahuti* (offerings) saying, *Indraya idam na mama*.

We need not stick to that kind of ritual but can convert all our actions into *yajnas*, by dedicating them unto the Infinite Reality with the ‘*na mama*’ (not mine) attitude.

2. *Rishi yajna*: Man is what he is, i. e. not an animal, because there have been good and great souls who have thought about and unravelled the mysteries of nature

and made life possible and comfortable for man; taught him the higher values of life and given out truths pertaining to the Infinite Reality. The puranas, the Upanishads, the Epics and other valuable books have come out of such *rishis*. The men of the ancient days recognised the fact that they were normally perfect and spiritually strong only because of the *rishis* and so they had a sense of obligation to them. In those days there were forests around each and every village or town and the *rishis* used to live in the jungles meditating. So before eating his food, the householder of that day went to the forest, offered the *rishis* food or anything else he had brought with him, sat at the feet of the *rishis* and learnt about the Supreme Reality and the other high principles of life. Then only would he return home and eat his food. So the things he did as a service to the *rishis* was called *rishi yajna*.

3. *Pitri yajna*: Even when the parents of a man are dead, he does not think their personalities are extinct completely. He believes that they must be existing somewhere, in some invisible realm. So he performs some rituals like *tarpana* and *sraddha* periodically, remembering his dead ancestors. Such duties are called *pitri yajna*—duties to one's dead parents.

4. *Manushya yajna*: Men are dependent on one another for their very existence. We are dependent for food on the farmers who cultivate and they in turn are dependent on the money we pay for buying their other necessities of life. Nobody is completely independent. Such being the case, each man has a duty towards the rest of the society. Man, realising how much he needs the help of others, must be ever ready to help others when they need it. One should not be bent on hoarding money but

must be prepared to share it with the needy. The householder of those days (a few men even these days) never used to take their food before feeding at least one guest, *atithi*. This and the many other things they did as their duty to mankind, was called *manushya yajna*.

5. *Bhuta yajna*: Duty towards other living beings.

Man is dependent not only on other human beings, but even on animals and insects, which help him in many ways. The cow and goat give him milk, the horse carries him to distant places, the crow, frog and snake act as natural scavengers and insect and pest killers. So, being dependent on these and many such animals, man thought it his duty to feed them and protect them. This was called *bhuta yajna*. Thus *pancha maha yajna* meant strictly one's duty towards—(1) God; (2) *rishis*; (3) ancestors; (4) humanity and (5) animals and other living beings. This was the high principle that governed and sustained the life of our ancient forefathers. Where has this *dharma* gone? We have not even the ghost of this principle of *sanatana dharma* now. We have lost a precious heritage. What we understand now by "our duties" (secular or religious) is much inferior to the grand concept of the ancients. Our concept of religion is performing a ritual now and then. The *sastri* or pundit will ask for a quantity of ghee; the housewife, in her generosity, will give only half the quantity and the husband goes on saying *swaha, swaha*, pouring a drop or two of ghee each time into the fire. And we think, by so doing, the welfare of ourselves and our *putras* and *pautras* (children and grandchildren) and our job and prosperity are all taken care of. How senseless! Without ethical perfection, without fulfilling our duties to the society, do you think you can

cheat Sarveswara by the mere show of ritualism! We imprison ourselves within the delusions of our own making. We are having so much of friction in our society, fight between landlords and farmers, proprietors of industries and the labourers, only because man thinks now only of his rights and not of his duties.

There is an interesting anecdote in this connection. H. G. Wells, Bernad shaw and some others drafted "The Rights of Man" and sent a copy each to famous statesmen all over the world, for their opinion. One such copy was sent to Pandit Nehru and another to Gandhiji.

Pandit Nehru replied: "Mr. Wells, you have drafted the rights of man, but who is to protect those rights? We have first to form a socialistic society in which the common man will have the power to protect those 'Rights of Man'. Let us first of all establish such a society."

Gandhiji sent a reply typical of his genius: "Mr. Wells, I have been an observer of life. First of all, I started demanding my rights from my wife, children and so on. The more and more I demanded, the more and more they also started to demand their rights. There was discord among us. I started forcing them. They became unhappy and I too became unhappy. After that, instead of demanding my rights of them, I started doing my duties to them as husband, father, etc., as best as I could and as sure as day following night, they started doing their duties to me. So, instead of drafting the 'Rights of Man', you would do better to draft the 'Duties of Man.'" Gandhiji had known the truth of *pancha maha yajna*.

Our ancients also recognised this fact and stressed that man should do his duty to God, to the *rishis*, to his

ancestors, to humanity and to the other living beings—that is the *pancha maha yajna*.

If only this principle is followed by the majority of the people, what a perfect society ours will be! It will be better than even Rama Rajya. Will there be any necessity for socialism and communism in such a society? We will not then need even the democracy of the Westerners.

Even now it is not too late. We can make our country a genuinely great land, as it was in the ancient days. For that, cultivate the spirit of *yajna*, *dana* and *tapa*, constantly remembering your duties to the society in the form of *pancha maha yajna*. Teach your children *daya*, *dana* and *dama*. If you do so, then only are you truly religious. Be sure that if you are true to your heritage of *sanatana dharma*, not only you, but your children also will come to have a glorious life.

Let us proceed with Krishna's reference to the *yajnas* and see what he has to say further. When Arjuna heard Krishna, he was puzzled. Krishna had said: He who does not adhere to the cycle of performing *yajnas*, being blessed with prosperity by the *Devas* and again performing *yajnas*, is an *indriyarama* (one who has taken refuge in the pleasures of the senses). His life is useless." Arjuna had a doubt then whether it was incumbent on each and everyone to perform the ritualistic *yajnas*. Krishna clears Arjuna's unexpressed doubt thus:

यस्त्वात्मरतिरेव स्यादात्ममृप्तश्च मानवः ।

आत्मन्येव च सन्तुष्टस्तस्य कार्यं न विद्यते ॥

*Yastvaatmaratireva syaadaatmatriptascha maanavah,
Atmanyeva cha santushtastasya kaaryam na vidyate.*

Do not think these *poojas* and ritualistic *yajnas* are to be performed by each and everyone. Not so. There are three types of people who are not ruled or conditioned by these *yajnas*. Who are they?

(i) *Atmarati*: *Rati* is delight. You go on hearing Vedanta. Until yesterday, you were thinking only of worldly enjoyment, (*prapanchika vishaya*) because you thought it will give you happiness. After hearing Vedanta and doing a bit of *manana*, (mental cogitation) you understand that the things of the world will not give real *ananda*. You start making an applied study of Vedanta because you are having an interest or delight, *rati*, in knowing and thinking about the *Atman*. You are finding satisfaction only in the thought of *Atman* and want to lead your life in that path. Such people are called *Atmaratis*.

(ii) *Atmatripta*: Becoming *Atmarati*, you will not remain like that for ever without progressing further. You will come to the conclusion: “*Mukti*” alone is supreme for me; I must attain that.” At this stage you will not be contended with studying and thinking about the Vedantic truths, but having an intense thirst to attain *Mukti*, will start meditating on the Supreme. You have passed the stage of study and will not have much use of the books now. Vedanta tells us: “Study me, understand me and then please throw me away. Don’t hug on to me, but go beyond me. I cannot give you *ananda*. You can attain *ananda* only when you transcend me and find joy within yourself.” A picture of the cow will not give us milk. So also a mere study of Vedanta will not lead us to *Mukti*. The ancient *rishis* did not stop at *sravana* and *manana* but did intense *nididhyasana*. After hearing and understanding, they practised what they had under-

stood. Thus doing intense *sadhana*, they realised the *Brahman*. Now there are so many theoretical pundits but very few sincere *sadhakas*. There is a *sloka* of Sankara misquoted by such theoretical Vedantins, which states: *Advaita* is only for thought, *bhavana*. But do not bring about *advaita* in practice.

भावाऽद्वैतं सदा कुर्यात् क्रियाद्वैतं न कर्हिचित् ॥

Bhaavaadvaitam sadaa kuryaat kriyaadvaitam na karhichit.

Even now this is the attitude of many people who read Vedanta. They are content with theory. This verse actually means that *advaita* theory should not make one callous. Don't end with the theory, but do *bhavana*, contemplation. Just after making a study of Vedanta, don't be callous in your life and actions, thinking that "all is one, Advaita, and so there is nothing to be cared for, feared or worried about." There is a *sloka* in *Uttara Gita*:

अनन्तशास्त्रं बहु वेदितव्यं अल्पश्च कालो बहवश्च विघ्नाः ।

यत्सारभूतं तदुपासितव्यं हंसो यथा क्षीरमिवाम्बुमिश्रम् ॥

Anantasastram bahu veditavyam

Alpascha kaalo bahavascha vighnah,

Yatsaarabhootam tadupaasitavyam

Hamso yathaa ksheeramivaamburnisram.

Do not think you have to study all the Vedas and *sastras*; it will take a very long time; nobody knows when you are going to die. But the essence of all of these texts is given out by so many realised sages. What essence they have taken and utilised for attaining *Brahma Jnana*, you know it; take refuge in it and practise it. Like a *hamsa*, swan, which separates milk from water and drinks only

the milk, so also you take out the essence of all the *sas-tras* and live up to it. Don't waste your time in studying each and every *sastra*."

Thus the ancients always laid emphasis on practice and not solely on theory. Thus an *atmatripta* is one who has come to the conclusion that there is nothing to be attained other than *Mukti*. With this conviction he is ready to forsake the pleasures of the world in order to attain *Mukti*. He starts meditating sincerely, for he has the *vyavasayatmika buddhi*, one-pointed purpose of mind. His contentment is not in having the things of the world but in keeping himself in tune with the Infinite; in short, in contemplation. And the third type is:

(iii) *Atmanyeva santushta*: This is the stage reached by an *atmatripta* who, after sincere *sadhana*, experiences *nirvikalpa samadhi*. After this he sees that One Thing alone everywhere. He is seated and submerged in the *ananda* of Realisation, *Brahmanubhuti*. A man of the world, a *karmi*, is submerged in the objects of the senses alone. A man of Realisation will be immersed in *satchidananda* alone. Bhagavan says: "These three types of persons, *atmarati*, *atmatripta* and *atmanyeva santushta* are exempt from the ritualistic performances. *Tasya karyam na vidyate*—He does not have to perform these. *Karyam* means, the ritualistic actions of the *yajna* type. They need not care for these *yajnas*. This is Krishna's statement. Is it not clear enough? *Yajnas* are only for the ignorant people who have no control over themselves and have no idea about *Mukti* or the path leading to it.

If you doubt it still, it only means that you are studying the Bhagawad Gita and betraying it.

In the 6th chapter, Krishna again says:

“Even a man who has interest in knowing the Ultimate Truth and sets about enquiring into what is permanent (he is called *jijnasu*) in this changing world, is no more in the realm of Do’s and Don’ts, *dharma* and *adharma*, that are put forth as obligatory by the Vedas, *sabdabrahma*.”

If you start having a spirit of direct enquiry into spiritual matters and a sincere aspiration to realise, then understand, you are beyond the rituals. You are not affected by the performance or non-performance of them. You are not governed by the rules and regulations that are formulated for the people who are attached to perishable things. Not that you should not perform them, but don’t be rivetted or tied down by them. You are not governed by them.

Further:

नैव तस्य कृतेनार्थो नाकृतेनेह कश्चन ।

न चास्य सर्वभूतेषु कश्चिदर्थव्यपाश्रयः ॥

Naiva tasya kritenaartha naakriteneha kaschana,

Na chaasya sarvabhooteshu kaschidarthavyapaasrayah.

“Such a man has got nothing to achieve by any process of action, or by abstaining from action. He depends on nobody.”

Any object of the world we want to get, falls under three categories, *prapya*, *utpada* and *samskarya*.

(i) *Prapya* is something which I have not got now, but I will get in the future, i. e. you have to wait for some time at least before you can attain it. Or you have to travel a distance to get it.

(ii) *Utpadya* is something I want, but it has to be produced e.g. grains, vegetables, etc. I have a garden and want to grow vegetables. I cannot get the vegetables unless I grow them. Most of the work in its production is to be done by nature. Seed alone is to be put by man.

(iii) *Samskarya* is something that can be got only by reshaping or changing the form of something else. I have timber and I want a table made of it. Raw rice is to be cooked to make it eatable.

Anything you want to obtain implies any one of these or a combination of these processes, viz. waiting, going a certain distance, producing or reshaping.

But the *Atman* does not fall under any of these categories.

(i) You have not to wait for it, because you are that very *Atman* right now, as always you have been and will also continue to be.

(ii) You have not to go anywhere to get it. You yourself are the *Atman*.

(iii) You have not to produce it, for out of it the very universe has come. It is in everything.

(iv) You cannot and are not to shape out an *Atman* but recognise and realise its existence in you.

It is there in its pristine glory, seated everywhere. Only we have to recognise it and be it.

Moreover, any worldly thing is objective to us, separate from us and is transient, for—

(a) anything I am going to get in the future, will in

course of time get away from me. It is only a matter of time.

(b) Anything I get from a distance will again go away from me. There will again be a distance between it and me. It will not be with me always.

(c) Anything I am able to produce must necessarily perish, for that is the very nature of the things of the world.

(d) Anything I attain by changing the shape of something else, will change its shape again.

But the *Atman* is ever You, it cannot get away from you, it will not get destroyed and it will not change its form. You are ever that Pure Consciousness, *sacchidananda*. You have just to recognise it. It is not a process of action. You don't have to work for it, strive for it. It is a process in consciousness. You have to know it, sink within and merge with the Pure Consciousness. You have to meditate and realise.

The wick of a lamp is burning. Still if the glass chimney is covered with soot, you cannot see the light. Remove the soot. The light will shine out immediately. The light is not produced. It was always there. If you go on repeating *mantras* and doing *japa*, will the soot be removed? No, you have to clean the chimney with a piece of cloth.

So also the *Atman* is forever shining in its pristine glory. But there is an *avarana*, covering, which hides it. This covering is *avidya*, ignorance. It has to be removed. What is the method? It is *vidya*, the process of *jnana*. This process is one of thought, not action. It is a process of knowing.

नैव तस्य कृतेनार्थो नाकृतेनेह कश्चन ।

न चास्य सर्वभूतेषु कश्चिदर्थव्यपाश्रयः ॥

Naiva tasya kritenaartho naakriteneha kaschana,

Na chaasya sarvabhooteshu kaschidarthavyapaasrayah.

“That man, who knows that the recognition or attainment of the Reality is the sole aim of his life, or he who has already attained it, has nothing to accomplish in this world by engaging in action, that is, by a process of work. He also does not have to avoid the onslaught of any unpleasant consequences by avoiding activity. By the non-performance of a thing also, he has not to accomplish anything. Being fully content, he is beyond *sukha* and *dukkha* resulting from action and inaction. Moreover, he has no dependence on anything or anybody in this world, for he is one who finds *ananda* in himself.

Such a man, who by turning within has realised the Self, outlives all Do's and Don'ts pertaining not only to ritualistic action but even to all secular actions.

Now a question may come in our minds:

“If he is not governed by any rules and regulations, what is the guarantee that he will not misbehave in society?” Let us analyse. Why do people misbehave and do wrong actions? It is because of selfishness. They identify themselves with their body and mind. They want to get things for their own pleasure and enjoyment. They think they can enjoy life only by acquiring more and more of worldly things. To get things for themselves, they have to see that those things are prevented from going to others. For that, they resort to crookedness and misbehaviour. A man will never misbehave if he has no

selfishness. That man who has realised the Supreme Reality will be floating in *ananda* and he acquires nothing external for his joy as he needs it not. Further he has transcended the body and mind-consciousness, *dehabhimana*, completely and is seated in the Superconscious state. To him the world is not different from himself. He has transcendental love for one and all. Can selfishness come from such a man? Would he ever misbehave? Any action issuing forth from him will carry in it an element of *ananda*. He will radiate *ananda* around him. A man who is ethically, morally and spiritually perfect is not governed by any *sastras* or religious books. He is the living essence of the *sastras* himself. Others can easily copy him and learn from him.

He does not remain lazy and inactive, although his *kartritvabhava*, doership feeling, goes away. Actions, highly beneficial to the society around and the wide world, issue out from him spontaneously, as illumination comes from the sun. His nature is full of pure love, without weakness. It is such people who have been instrumental in the progress and advancement of the world.

Chapter 17

VEDAS AND RITUALS

I am going to say a few words about the Vedas and the correct attitude we should maintain while studying them.

People have a notion that the Vedas are sacred and approach them with overawe. They believe that they have come out of the mouth of *Parabrahman*. They believe this literally. This is not so, for *Parabrahman*, the infinite impersonal entity, has no mouth! What is actually meant is that the Vedas are not the product of the intelligence of mortal man. The ancient *rishis*, when they were in a superconscious state, intuitively realised so many facts and hidden truths. These, they translated into words when they came back to the ordinary level of consciousness. Since in the superconscious state the *rishis* had merged themselves in the Supreme *Brahman*, the truths made clear to them in that state are considered as coming directly from *Brahman*. The term "from *Brahman's* mouth" is only an allegorical way of saying that.

Vedas also abound in statements which are the product of intelligence and not of intuition. Such are called *anuvadas*, and are not valid or authoritative as the intuitive revelations. *Anuvadas* have no *apurvata* (uncommonness) about them, as these are within the common knowledge of man, that is, sense perception or intelligence.

Study the Vedas as objectively, as logically and as critically as you would any other book of science but not questioning the Vedic truths of intuition. There are a lot of immature and undignified statements (they might have conveyed sense in those days, but convey no meaning to us now) in the Vedas. Sankara says: "Accept those things that are consistent with Vedantic truth and reject the statements that are inconsistent."

Without knowing what the Vedas contain, many think they enjoin ritualism alone. The Vedas mostly deal with the modes of life of a certain set of people, the ideas and ideals they held, the rituals they performed etc. Each Veda was divided into three parts—the *karma kanda*, the *upasana kanda* and the *jnana kanda*.

The *karma kanda* deals with the rites and rituals meant to propitiate Gods, who would confer boons on the performers. These are naturally taken up by people who are in their spiritual infancy and have no conception of *Mukti*, the highest goal of human life.

The *upasana kanda* was taken up by people who took to *vanaprastha* or forest life, relinquishing their worldly ties, to meditate. They scanned the significance and meanings of the rituals in their mind and gradually became fit to enter *jnana nishta*. *Vanaprastha* life was a preparation for reaching this state and attaining Realisation. The *Upasanas* mostly consist of the mental performance of rituals and meditation on deities (*Devatas*). The right conception of *Brahman* is not there in the *upasanas*, which are also free from the fire-rites of the rituals.

The *jnana kanda*, namely, the Upanishads, generally given in the end portion of the Vedas, deals with the

highest, most noble thoughts that human beings have been able to touch upon—the truths that have remained as truths since milleniums and will remain so milleniums hence, nay, till eternity. *Jnana kanda*, the Upanishads, is called Vedanta.

Read and understand the Upanishads. This is very easy now, because so many good translations of the Vedantic texts are available. You need not have much of Sanskrit knowledge even. Try to study them analytically and accept whatever is good and ennobling.

Not understanding the Vedas properly, we think ritualism is the beginning and end of our religion. And even here, what we do as rituals, are not really the original rituals prescribed in the *karma kanda*. We are not doing even a fraction of it and the other two *kandas* viz. *upasana* and *jnana*, we are mostly not aware of! Even *sandhya-vandana*, which the three *varnas* are supposed to perform daily, is an *upasana*, but we do it understanding it to be a ritual (*karma*).

Ancient *mimamsakas* and *karmakandins* believed that Vedas give categorical injunctions consisting of commands to do rituals. Jaimini, Mandanamisra and others held the view that Vedas are mandatory only and not revelatory of any truth. Sankara, on the other hand, has stated that Vedas are not mandatory, but only revelatory, presenting to us supersensory truths. (They are *jnapaka* and not *karaka*). Followers of Jaimini and Mandanamisra, who are now becoming scarce, are still thinking that *vaidika karmas* have to be necessarily performed, because they are ordered by the Vedas. Sankara says: “It is not so. It is not mandatory or in the form of orders, but only revelatory. It informs you like *vaidya sastra* (medical science).

Vaidya sastra says that if a man is suffering from cold, he must take such and such a medicine. If he is suffering from fever, he should take such and such a medicine. But suppose he does not suffer from it, is there any need for him to take that medicine?"

Similarly if you are after *swarga*, you may do these rituals. If you are not after *swarga*, then there is no need to do these rituals. There is a *sloka* in the *Mundaka Upanishad*:

प्लवा ह्येते अदृढा यज्ञरूपा अष्टादशोक्तमवरं येषु कर्म ।
एतच्छ्रेयो येऽभिमन्दन्ति मूढा जरामृत्युं ते पुनरेवापि यन्ति ॥

Plavaa hyete adridhaa yajnaroopaa
Ashtaadasoktamavaram yeshu karma
Etachchhreyo yebhinandanti moodhaa
Jaraamrityum te punarevaapi yanti.

which means:

"If you are desirous of attaining *swarga*, then you perform the *yajnas* and *yagas* hitherto explained. But you cannot cross the *samsara sagara* by *yagas* and *yajnas*; they will be just like frail rafts which will break into pieces at the onslaught of the first big wave. For attaining *Mukti*, *yagas* and *yajnas* are of no avail. The *karmas* (rituals) given in the *karma kanda* are far inferior and of no use if our aim is directed towards *Mukti*. Those who extol *yajnas* found in the ritualistic portion of the Vedas and consider them to be *sreya* are fools. Their fate will be repeated births and deaths."

These are not my words. This is the very statement in the Vedas. In *Rama Gita*: Sri Rama tells Lakshmana,

तस्मात् त्यजेत् कार्यमशेषतः सुधीः
 विद्याविरोधान्न समुच्चयो भवेत् ।
 आत्मानुसंधानपरायणः सदा
 निवृत्तसर्वेन्द्रियवृत्तिगोचरः ॥
 यावत् शरीरादिषु माययात्मधीः
 तावत् विधेयो विधिवादकर्मणाम् ॥

*Tasmaat tyajet kaaryamasheshatah sudheeh
 Vidyaavirodhaanna samuchhayo bhavet,
 Aatmaanusanandhaanaparaayanah sadaa
 Nivrittasarvendriyavrittigocharah.
 Yaavat sareeraadishu maayayaatmadheeh
 Taavat vidheyo vidhivaadakarmanam.*

If you want to attain *jnana*, leave away all rituals. Never think that you can unite both rituals and *jnana* together. You cannot be partly a *karma kandin* and partly a *jnana nishta*, for these two cannot go together. In the performance of rituals, the mind becomes extrovert, while in *jaana marga* your mind has to turn within and kill itself. The two paths are widely different. Rituals are opposed to *vidya* (contemplation). Sankara says in his Gita commentary (18—55) that the paths of rituals and *jnana* are widely different and opposed to each other like a mustard and a mountain:

पर्वतसर्पपयोरिवान्तरवान् विरोधः ।

Parvatasarshapayorivaantaravaan virodhah.

If you engage in rituals, the mind will be drawn out in spite of yourselves. Moreover, when you engage in

rituals, there is consciously or unconsciously an expectation of reward for your action. Any reward you may get will have to be of an impermanent nature, because anything that is given to you will also be taken away from you. *Jnana* not being objective, cannot be given to you by anyone under any circumstances. It is a subjective realisation, that is of a permanent nature and is opposed to all activities. The mind is not to veer forward but to turn back and sink within, to realise the Atman already existing.

Rama says: All rituals are full of *dosha* (defects). The *ajnana* (ignorance) that "I am real, this body is real, the world is real," will never go away by engaging in rituals, for in the very performance of them, you are dwelling on the objects of the outside world. Even the best man, when he engages in rituals, has an innate feeling that he must get something in return. A man performs them only when he identifies himself with the body, mind and intellect. How can you feel, "I am not the body, mind or intellect; I am the *sakshi* within" if you go on doing actions which imprint in you the "I am the body, mind and intellect" attitude? So Sri Rama says, a man of real knowledge, if he wants *Mukti*, must leave off all rituals and become a *jnanavicharavan* (one who constantly thinks and dwells on *jnana*). The root cause of all evils, miseries and sorrows in the world is *avidya*—ignorance or *ajnana*—wrong understanding, and the only thing that will remove this cause completely is *vidya* and *jnana*—contemplation and proper understanding of the truth.

So outlive, go beyond, all rituals and become a *jnanavicharavan*. It may be asked: "What is the place of rituals in our society and why do people perform them?"

Rituals are intended only for people of *rajas* and *tamas*, to restrain, regulate and discipline themselves, if they will care for it. *Rajasik* and *tamasik* people are not given to *vichara* or *manana*; they do not analyse the world themselves and try to arrive at the truth. The pull of their senses makes them completely extrovert, as they hanker after enjoyments. The world holds full charm for them. If they are left unrestricted, they will be like mad bulls let loose, because they have no control over themselves. Rituals are adopted by such people. They can make their lives more regulated and disciplined by turning them into *karma yoga*, in the light of Vedanta.

In the *Bhagavata* there is a *sloka*:

लोके व्यवायामिषमद्यसेवा
नित्यास्तु जन्तोर्न हि तत्र चोदना ।
व्यवस्थितिस्तासु विवाहयज्ञ-
सुराग्रहैरासु निवृत्तिरिष्टा ॥

Loke vyavaayaamishamadyasevaa
Nityaastu jantorna hi tatra chodanaa,
Vyavasthitistaasu vivaahayajna-
Suraagrahairaasu nivrittirishtaa.

“The nature of man is that he wants to drink, eat meat and have sex enjoyment. Knowing these to be in the nature of human beings, Vedas try to bring about some regulation. If you want to enjoy sex pleasure, Vedas say, do not be a polygamic man, but marry one woman and let your licence be restricted to her alone. If you want to drink, Vedas say, do not go to a toddy shop, but do such and such a *yajna*, bring the *somaluta*, take the juice

of it and after offering it to God, drink it. When such regulations are brought about, we won't become slaves to the *indriyas*. Seeing that a lot of botheration is to be undergone if alcoholic drinks are to be taken, a man may avoid drinking, thinking it is not worth all the trouble. Thus *karma kanda* rituals are to be viewed as regulatory and not at all as mandatory. Always getting free from these *tamasik* and *rajasik* habits as well as these ignorant rituals, is preferable."

But what is the present-day religion? Baits are dangled to attract people to do rituals. "If you perform such and such a ritual, you will reap so much of benefit." This is the sole criterion of our present-day religion. In the name of religion, innocent and well-meaning people get deluded. The root cause of all rituals is *raga* and *dvesha*. People mistakenly believe that their happiness comes from outside. They attempt to do a hundred things but succeed only in one of them. So they are on the lookout for some magical formula by which they can accomplish the remaining ninety-nine things. Rituals, by promising them this and that, seem to offer them just the thing they are looking for, an easy method of accomplishing all their desires.

Some people do *sri vidya* or *srichakra upasana*. They have been told that if they do that *upasana*, Goddess Raja Rajeswari would bless them with undreamt of riches. I ask these people: "Did Henry Ford do *srichakra upasana*? Did Rockefeller do it? Still, how did they become multi-millionaires?" Are not these *upasanas* born of ignorance? It is a religious show. We waste our lives by such *upasanas*. They are capable of giving neither *Moksha* nor the

wealth that is desired. All this is a form of *tantra* or *mantra* cult. They are not *brahma vidya* but *bhrama* (mad) *vidya*. Still why do people take to them? Their *raga* and *dvesha* propel them to resort to such rituals. Those *gurus* who tell people to do such things are blind and the *sishyas* who do them are equally blind and avaricious. It is like the blind leading the blind. In the Vedas, there is no mention of such *upasanas*, as these are later *tantric* developments.

Our rituals have generally degenerated into empty shows carrying no meaning. Throw away the empty show. You worship Krishna by offering him flowers and sweet-meats. But do you care to do as he bids you to do in the Bhagavad Gita? He says: "Work on without *raga* and *dvesha*. Recognise that the same principle which is in you, is in every one else and recognise that principle everywhere."

If we will only obey him, will there not be accord and harmony in the whole of our country, nay in the whole world? Will there be any room for selfishness, crookedness, anger or greed?

There are two sons to a mother. One of them dutifully prostrates before her every day, but disobeys her at every instance and acts irresponsibly. The other son does not prostrate, but obeys her instructions and behaves responsibly. Now, who is the better of the two sons—the one who prostrates but disobeys her at every turn, or the other who does not prostrate but respects her words? Is it prostration that matters or one's conduct and purity? Our behaviour is just like that of the son, who prostrates but disobeys his mother.

Our brains are so impervious to good ideas, that it requires a great deal of knocking and hitting before anything good can enter them. We have lost a wonderful trait that our ancients possessed. They were logical and scientific and did not believe in or start their enquiry from any dogmas. They started from the fundamentals and went on searching and researching till they came face to face with truth. With a clear mind they went on searching for the hidden mysteries of human personality and also the outer nature, and unravelled them. Where is this spirit of enquiry now?

Bhartrihari has written:

प्रसह्यमणिमुद्धरेत् मकरवक्त्रदंष्ट्रान्तरात्
 समुद्रमपि सन्तरेत् प्रचलदुर्मिमालाकुलम् ।
 भुजंगमपि कोपिनं शिरसि पुष्पवद्धारयेत्
 न तु प्रतिनिविष्टमूर्खजनचित्तमाराधयेत् ॥

*Prasahyamanimuddharet makaravaktradamshtraantaraat
 Samudramapi santaret prachaladurmimaalaakulam,
 Bhujangamapt kopinam sirasi pushpavaddhaarayet
 Na tu pratinivishtamoorkhajanachittamaaraadhayet.*

“We can accomplish the almost impossible feat of fishing and killing the *makara*, a deadly fish, and taking the jewel from its skull. We can even cross an ocean with a small boat. We can catch an angry cobra, pull out its fangs and coil it round our heads. But one thing is just impossible to do, namely, to satisfy the self-satisfied idiots, who blindly believe that whatever they do, know or think is alone the right thing.”

Let us not be the self-satisfied idiots of Bhartrihari's verse. Let us have open and receptive minds. Let us do proper *vichara*. What is the world? Are this body, mind and intellect real? What is the non-changing reality in this world, attaining which we may have abiding peace, *ananda*? Determine that you will not waste a moment of your life without progressing towards the Infinite Reality. Be ethically perfect. Be disciplined and regulated in life. Meditate as much as possible. Realise that *sukha* and *dukkha* are of your own making. Nobody, nay, nothing in this world can give you *sukha* or *dukkha*, unless you allow yourself to be affected by external factors. There is a *sloka* in *Srimad Bhagavatam*:

नायं जनो मे सुखदुःखहेतुः
 न देवतात्मा ग्रहकर्मकालाः ।
 मनः परं कारणमामनन्ति
 संसारचक्रं परिवर्तयेद्यत् ॥

Naayam jano me sukhadukkhahetuh
Na devataatmaa grahakarmakaalaah,
Manah param kaaranamaamananti
Samsaarachakram parivartayedat.

"No man in the world can give you *sukha* or *dukkha*. Do not think God or your *karmas* are going to give you *dukkha*. The times or the planets cannot affect you. There are no lucky and unlucky periods for you. No factors external to you can ever give you *sukha* or *dukkha*. It is your mind and mind alone that causes *sukha* or *dukkha*. The mind alone is the cause of repeated births and deaths."

Instead of making use of religion to increase our desire and greed, let us make use of it to discipline, regulate and purify ourselves and attain *Mukti*.

In spite of all these, if you still feel that you should not leave off rituals, then do them with sincerity and mental purity as *yajna*, *dana* and *tapa*, i. e. as sacrifice, charity and austerity. Do it with *sraddha*. Let the mind be brought away from its wanderings here and there to a particular line of thought. Do not give the pundit eight annas, as though paying a toll-fee, in order to get an entry to *swarga*. Give as much as you can afford. Do it with reverence and do not think that you are purchasing so much of *punya*. When you go to a *yajna*, go with an element of *tapas*. Do not fill in your stomach and go. Go with an empty stomach. If the stomach is overloaded, the body secretes heat and gas, and *Brahmacharya* cannot be kept up. Why do we fast from the previous day, on the death anniversary of parents? Because, fasting is a form of physical *tapas*. On such occasions, do not hurt others by thought, word or deed. Be pure in mind and body.

Some people have a doubt: "Shall I then do away with the *pooja* room and throw away its contents?"

I am not saying that you should throw away the pictures of gods and goddesses from your *pooja* room, but that you should not waste your time over *poojas*. Spend that time in meditation. Let it be a place of meditation for you and your children. Instead of using the room for begging things of God, make it a place to bring about a certain amount of concentration. In the initial stages of religious development, if you ask your children to meditate without

pictures, it will be difficult for them generally. For *satvik* children, meditation is very easy, but not for the other two *gunas*. Those individuals who believe in the ideal of Vedanta, and who also believe that the ideal is something that can be attained, need not waste their time in the *pooja* room. For, we do not know how long we will live. Attain *Mukti* when you are strong in mind and body.

व्याघ्रीव तिष्ठति जरा परितर्जयन्ती
 रोगाश्च शत्रव इव प्रहरन्ति देहम् ।
 आयुः परिस्रवति भिन्नघटादिवांभः
 लोकस्तथाप्यहितमाचरतीति चित्रम् ॥

Vyaaghreeva tishthati jaraa paritarjayantee
Rogaascha satrava iva praharanti deham,
Aayuh parisravati bhinnaghataadivaambhah
Lokastathaapyahitamaacharateeti chitram.

“Every day we are getting older and older. Our senses are getting weaker and weaker. Just as a hungry tigress, which has given birth to two or three cubs, will always be on the alert to leap and grab any animal, so also is our old age ever prowling to jump on us. Like serious minded and cunning enemies, diseases and ill-health are waiting, ready to attack you, when you least expect it. Each day as you live, life is ebbing away, like water kept in an earthen pot leaking from the numerous small holes. In spite of these stark naked facts of life, it is curious, people do not know what is good and right for them.”

Our life being so uncertain and transitory, let us not waste it by doing *poojas* and *homas*, when we can come

directly to *Moksha* through the path of *karma yoga* and *jnana yoga*. Sankara says in his *Brahmasutra Bhashya* (of the first four *sutras*): “The Ultimate Reality is uncreated. You can know it, realise it, only by a process which is not of the nature of a ritual or action. For, anything you obtain as a result of work, is created by that work and anything that is created is bound to perish. So, anything that you get by work cannot be the Ultimate Reality, as it is not everlasting. You have to realise the-Ultimate Reality stopping all actions, sitting and meditating. You have to sink within and know it within yourself. So the process of *jnana* is the very negation of activity.”

Religious or otherwise, an action is an action and Sankara emphatically says that actions cannot lead us to *Moksha*. Again, in the same *Bhashya*, there is a statement that the purport or central meaning of what is contained in the Vedas is the highest truth: “You are verily *Brahman*. By realising IT you can attain everlasting bliss—*satchidananda*.”

When such a statement is in the Vedas, why do you hug on to the lesser things prescribed in them, which will give only ephemeral results? Take the example of *swarga*. True, the Vedas say that by properly performing certain religious rituals, you will get *swarga*. The very same Vedas also say that after attaining it and enjoying it for some time, you will have to come back to life on earth, whereas once you realise and attain *Mukti*, you will have eternal peace and joy—no more births and deaths. And the exertion required for attaining *swarga* is as much as or even more than that required for *Moksha*.

Sankara says: “Vedas exhaust themselves when they say that *Brahman* and the individual soul are one

and if the individual soul tries, he can attain *Brahman*, and the Supreme Bliss is ever his. I simply consider the rest of the Vedas as utter superfluity."

There is a *sloka* in the *Bhagawad Gita*:

यान्ति देवव्रता देवान्पितृन्यान्ति पितृव्रताः ।

भूतानि यान्ति भूतेज्या यान्ति मद्याजिनोऽपि माम् ॥

Yaanti Devavrataa Deevan pitreenyanti pitrivrataah,

Bhootaani yaanti bhootejyaa yaanti madyaajinopi maam.

This means:

"After death, people who do the worship of *Devas*, reach *Devaloka*. People who believe that their primary duty in religion is doing their *tarpanas* and giving oblations to their *pitris* (ancestors), reach the *pitriloka*. So also, those who worship ghosts and spirits reach the realm of the spirits and those who worship Me, the Infinite Reality, reach Me, i.e. *Brahman*."

Sankara in interpreting this *sloka* says: "The effort that we have to put in for going to *swarga*, *pitriloka*, etc., as well as that for attaining *Moksha* is the same; yet the attaining of *swarga*, etc., gives only temporary joy whereas in attaining the Supreme Reality, the *ananda* you get is infinite, non-changing, immutable and eternal. So Bhagavan is crying out aloud with compassion "Oh men of the world, why are you not seeking to attain Me? When you get such wonderful results with the same stress and strain, why do you not try for *Moksha*?"

Sankara continues: "*Swarga* is *anubhava anarudha* i.e. in nobody's experience. Nobody has come and reported to us of his experiences in *swarga*. It is just a matter of

belief and not of experience. Hence there is scope for a genuine doubt as to whether there is any *swarga* (heaven). But the result of *Atma jnana* is *anubhava arudha*, within anybody's experience, even in this very life. There have been and there are so many realised souls who have experienced this bliss. Is it not then wiser to go after this union with the Infinite Consciousness, which can be experienced right in this life, than to aim at attaining *swarga* which nobody has seen, and even going where, you will have to come back to the earth?" Sankaracharya has repeatedly emphasised the futility of rituals and says: "Any purpose that is served by rituals is served much better by Vedanta." He thunders: "Go after that Infinite Peace and *ananda* and not the lesser joys." Alas! that Sankara is only worshipped by us through "Jayantis" and not followed!

If the Impersonal *Brahman* be the Supreme Reality, what place do the popular deities and idols have in our religion?

In *Kathopanishad*, there is a *sloka*:

अङ्गुष्ठमात्रः पुरुषः पुराणः

सदा नराणां हृदये सन्निविष्टः ॥

Angushthamaatrah purushah puraanah,

Sadaa naraanaam hridaye sannivishtah.

Which means: "There is *Brahman* seated in our heart, of the size of thumb." It is absurd to take this literally. Sankara concludes, 'this is only for those people who cannot reflect and understand that the ultimate of all existence is *satchidananda*, Pure Consciousness. Symbols are for mediocre people to meditate upon. Do

not go after them, if you want *jñāna*! Images are good for people in the initial stages of religious development. They have to conceive of *Brahman* through different names and forms and meditate upon them, just as children learn geography with the aid of maps. Can you call the map of India the actual India? Similarly, the images are aids for us to meditate upon the Supreme Reality. The mistake we commit is, we think that the idol is itself the Supreme Reality. You are going to a place, say Poona and on the way, you see a sign post pointing to the direction of Poona. Will it not be foolishness to go and hang on to the sign post, saying that Poona has been reached? Of equal foolishness is our hugging on to idols and images, without going higher and higher in the direction which they point out to us.

Krishna says in the *Gita*:

जिज्ञासुरपि योगस्य शब्दब्रह्मातिवर्तते ॥

Jijnaasurapi yogasya sabdabrahmaativartate.

, 'One who has even the desire to know *Brahma vidya*, goes beyond *sabda Brahman* (i.e. Vedas) viz. the rituals of the Vedas.'

Transcend all image worship and rituals and seek the direct path of *Brahma vidya* and reach the Infinite Self.

You can, if you want to.

Chapter 18

WHAT LEADS TO MUKTI?

Even though man is a far higher creature than the animals, he yet commits, along with the animals, the great mistake of identifying himself with his body and sense-organs, his main source of joy being the enjoyments derived from the sense-objects. Like other animals, man too seeks food and shelter to sleep and strives to keep his body safe from injury. He too seeks a mate, like animals. The whole life is thus centered round the senses and he acts according to the prompting and dictates of the senses. These sense-promptings are the origin of his activities, which are called *pravritti karmas*. Disease and old age, however, are a great stumbling block to his happiness through such activities, as the senses gradually lose their keenness. It is then that he seeks the aid of higher powers, which he fancies to exist, but does not directly know. If it is a heritage of this world for the body and senses to become infirm and useless due to old age, he fancies that the body and senses will remain eternally strong and capable in the worlds of the higher powers. So, he somehow wants to propitiate these higher powers, about whom he does not know well, by conventional acts evolved by marked men of the society, in his own midst. The acts that are so born, constitute the immemorial rituals of that particular group. His object in propitiating the higher powers, nay, God even, is al-

ways the same; to give eternal joy to his senses and his body and to those closely related to his body. Every religion in this world has a cloak of rituals, to which its adherents cling to invariably.

Here, man has not even now left off his identification with the body and the senses, the pleasures of which still prompt him to perform rituals, which he fancies will miraculously confer well-being on him here and hereafter. Such rituals, which have become hoary and sacred and have as such been accepted and respected by most, if not all, also constitute *pravritti dharmas* or *karmas*. These are assigned a far higher place than the temporal *pravritti karmas*, as these are considered very holy and find a prominent place in religious literature.

But a mistake cannot remain undetected and uncorrected for ever. Man gets disillusioned when these *pravritti karmas* fail to confer on him the expected results. He then begins to evaluate them, to find out the source of his error. He perhaps gets help from a sage. He finds out that his great error had its roots in the mistaken identification with the body and senses. Are not these senses controlled by the mind? Is not the mind controlled by the intellect? And, finally, are not the states of both the mind and the intellect under the observation of the inner seer in himself? So, there is an inner 'Seer', greater than the senses, mind and intellect.

This analysis makes him conscious of a new element in him which is, in a sense, greater than all other elements of which he is conscious.

Now, he begins his attempt to understand clearly the inner 'Seer' in himself. His mind cannot tackle this job,

unless it is taken off the senses and fully and completely turned towards the investigation of the 'Seer'. This exertion to control the senses and lead the mind away from them towards the 'Seer', is called *nivritti dharma* or *karma*. Here, the identification with the body and senses gets attenuated. The original mistake is being rectified. Thus *nivritti karmas* consist of the various endeavours to control the mind and direct it towards the 'Seer'.

Pravritti karmas are of the nature of external activities, whether they are sacred or secular. They require the assistance of various outside materials and agencies for their performance. A proper examination of the rituals of every religion will confirm this. Further, they are born, as explained above, from the great false identification of man with his body and senses, just as in the case of animals. Like other animals, man too is not at first conscious of this wrong identification. But he can understand this, unlike animals, when the fact is clearly pointed out to him. This is the basic difference between man and animal. This is *viveka*.

Nivritti karma begins when man comes to understand his great original mistake and wants to rectify it. He determines then not to be the slave of his senses any more. He beats a retreat from the previous habit of pampering and petting his senses. This constitutes the beginning of *nivritti dharma* or *karma*.

Then he understands the uselessness of rituals, born of his inherent wrong notion and beats a retreat from it too. The only assistance that he now needs is from his own mind; the mind must now be transformed by freeing it of its mistaken ideas and by leading it more and more

towards the 'Seer.' The operation of *nivritti karma* has begun. It is in a direction exactly in reverse of *pravritti karma*. His mind no more thinks of even Heavenly sense pleasures. It is now engaged in discovering the truth about the 'Seer.' It is now engaged in *Atma nishta*. Finally *nivritti karma* ends in the realisation of the *Atman*. The cloud around the *Atman* has cleared.

So far as the Hindu scriptures are concerned, the greater portions of the Rik, Yajur and Sama Vedas, especially their Brahmanas, deal with only the innumerable *pravritti karmas*. All these *karmas* are intended to earn for man celestial sense pleasures, which will not cloy. Man has not yet understood that sense pleasures, born of contact of the senses with sense-objects, have to end as soon as the the contact ends. So the Vedic sacrifices to the various *Devatas* suffer from this fundamental defect. They are all *pravritti karmas*. So, the wise will refrain from them.

The rituals of the other religions also suffer from the same defect and, but for the untiring efforts of the clergy to preserve these, would have vanished as the Vedic sacrifices have gone out of vogue among the Hindus these days.

But the Hindu scriptures also include the Upanishads. Many passages in these Upanishads deal with the nature of the 'SEER' or the *Atman*. Other religions have no clear and definite comprehension of the 'Seer', *Atman*, nor is it found as a topic in their religious texts.

Mention of God is conspicuous by its absence in the Upanishads, but the *Atman* has expanded far beyond the limits of the body of man, and has become the Brahman,

the 'Expanded', which pervades everything and controls everything in the universe. In the Hindu Puranas and the later scriptures, God is pictured as some Being remaining above in the far off Heavens and is supposed to control the universe from there, but the Upanishads declare the 'Expanded Atman', seated in the heart of every being, as the all-pervading Satta; it controls the Universe from inside each. *Nivritti dharma* or *karma*, through which one can realise this *Atman*, is the topic of the Upanishads.

The origin, nature and the fundamental difference between *pravritti* and *nivritti dharmas* have to be firmly grasped for a proper understanding of the real basis of spiritual practices. All the *dharmas* found recorded in the Vedas have to be classified under the two different headings: *Pravritti* and *Nivritti*. *It is the nivritti dharmas alone that go to constitute spirituality.*

When he resorts to a religious act, man would do well to judge whether the act belongs to the *pravritti* or *nivritti* group and take up only the *nivritti karmas*. *Pravritti* born of *avidya*, ignorance, rivets man's bondage; *nivritti* breaks the misunderstanding and this bondage completely. The *Atman* now shines in its innate and inherent glory. Man has attained his supreme goal, *Mukti*.

CONCLUSION

I would like to conclude this series of discourses with a few *slokas* from *Yogavasishtha*. The *slokas* more or less summarise the whole of Vedānta.

संकल्पजालकलनैव जगत् समग्रं
संकल्पजालकलनात्तु मनोविलासः ।
संकल्पजालमलमुत्सृज निर्विकल्पं
आश्रित्य निश्चयमवाप्नुहि राम शान्तिम् ॥

Sankalpajaalakalanaiva jagat samagram
Sankalpajaalakalanaattu manovilaasah,
Sankalpajaalamalamutsrija nirvikalpam
Aasritya nischayamavaapnuhi Rama saantim.

“O Sri Rama, the whole *prapancha* (world) is nothing but a projection of the mind. The *sankalpas*, our imaginations, concerning the future which may or may not come true, are a magical show performed by the mind. What is the mind? It is a bundle of thoughts. The magical mind projects and presents the world before us and we seem to be seeing the world and it appears real. As long as this idea, this understanding that the world is real and exists apart from us, remains, we will have no peace at all. What should we do then to get peace? Throw away these

magical *sankalpas* (thoughts) completely, without leaving even a trace. When thoughts are thrown away, the mind will cease to be the mind. When the *sankalpas* are thrown off through *samabhava*, *raga* and *dwesha* will not be there and the mind's going-out-tendency will get stopped. The more the extrovert tendency reduces, the mind will be having that much of peace. When you sit and meditate with such a quiet mind, the mind will die there and you will ascend to the great Reality, pure *nirvikalpa* or *jnana samadhi*. Only by this process i.e., only by becoming one with the Ultimate Reality, will you have real *santi*. You will have no more *raga* and *dwesha*, no more regrets and sorrows; you will have gone beyond all duality, being seated in *satchidananda*."

Vasishtha points out the way to attain *Moksha* in another set of *slokas* thus:

मोक्षद्वारे द्वारपालाश्चत्वारः परिकीर्तिताः ।
 शमो विचारः सन्तोषश्चतुर्थः साधुसंगमः ॥
 एते सेव्याः प्रयत्नेन चत्वारो द्वौ त्रयोथवा ।
 द्वारमुद्धाटयन्त्येते मोक्षराजगृहे तथा ॥
 एकं वा सर्वयत्नेन प्राणांस्त्यक्त्वा समाश्रयेत् ।
 एकस्मिन् वशगे यान्ति चत्वारोपि वशं यतः ॥

*Mokshadvaare dvaarapaalaaschatvaarah parikeertitaah,
 Samo vicharah santoshaschaturthah saadhusangamah.
 Ete sevyaaah prayatnena chatvaaro dvau trayothavaa,
 Dvaaramuddhaatayantyete moksharaajagrihe tathaa.
 Ekam vaa sarvayatnena praanaamstyaktvaa samaasrayet,
 Ekasmin vasage yaanti chatvaaropi vasam yatah,*

“There is a mansion called *Moksha*. It has four strong gates and in each of the gates, one gate-keeper is standing guarding it. The gate-keepers are called *kshama*, *vichara*, *santosha* and *sadhu sangama*. If you are to enter the mansion of *Mukti* or *Moksha*, you have to make friends with the gate-keepers, or else you will not be admitted inside.”

Sama is equipoise of the mind.

Vichara is clear thinking, analytical assessment of the *samsara*, i. e. what is right and what is wrong, what is permanent and what is impermanent, how is one to get pure *santi*, etc.

Santosha is contentment through *samabhava*.

Sadhu sangama or *satsanga* is association with realised souls and men of high ethical conduct.

Vasishta says: “O Rama, do not care for any religion. Whether you are religious or not, do not worry about it. You might have been irreligious throughout your life; you might not have thought of God at all. But, if you can determine right now that ‘without *Moksha* I cannot have *santi* (peace of mind) and *Moksha* alone is my aim in life’, you can still enter the mansion of *Moksha*, by doing as I tell you. Even if you have to undergo the worst troubles, you must do *seva* (service) of the four gate-keepers. and cultivate their friendship at all costs. Then you are sure to enter the mansion of *Moksha*. Supposing, in spite of your efforts you are not able to be friendly with all the four of them, then make friends with at least three of them. If that even is not possible, cultivate the friendship of at least two of the gate-keepers. If you are unable to do even that, O Rama, do not fail to make friends with at least one of them. You may have to strive and die in

the process, yet you may prefer death to not cultivating the friendship of at least one of them. If you have the friendship of atleast one of them, you will automatically become friends with the other three, because the four gate-keepers are good friends among themselves. Once one of them becomes your friend, he will make you acquainted with the other three and before long all the four will be your close friends."

For, if you cultivate *sama*, non-perturbation, you will thereby acquire a high degree of mental purity. When there is mental purity, the intellect becomes sharpened and it starts *vichara*, discriminative analysis of what is real and what is unreal in the seen world. This will lead you to the understanding that the *Atman* alone is the Supreme thing, and that the joys and sorrows of the world are relative and transitory. The direct result of this will be the spontaneous cultivation of *sama bhava*. After this, it will not be long before you start having *satsanga*, association of good people and realised souls. You will find greater and greater *ananda*, *santi* in their association. Progressing thus, you will reach the Ultimate Reality, *Mukti*, very soon, advised and taught by them about the subtle aspects of contemplation.

Or else, if you start with *vichara*, you begin analysing with a clean intellect; "What is God? Who am I? Where have I come from? Wherefrom has the world emanated? What is the relation between God and me and between me and the world?" etc. The other three divine qualities cited above, *kshama*, *santosha* and *sadhu sangama* will automatically come to you. It does not require great Vedantic learning or extraordinary intellectual ability to do *vichara*. A clean and clear mind is enough.

Sankara says:

अनात्मवित् वेदान् तत्त्वतः विज्ञातुं न शक्नोति ।

प्रागपि कर्मजिज्ञासायाः अधीतवेदान्तस्य ब्रह्मजिज्ञासोपपत्तेः ॥

Anaatmavit vedaan tattvatah vijnaatum na saknoti.

Praagapi karmajijnaasaayaah adheetavedantasya Brahmajijnaasopapatteh.

“A man may not have heard or known about the Vedic rituals but if he has *Brahma jnana mumukshutva*, intense thirst to know Vedanta and attain *Mukti*, he will in due course attain it. Another man may have learnt by heart the whole of the Vedas and the other *sastras*. Yet not having clearly grasped what is *Atman* (Self), he may not know the practical essence of the Vedas.” He will be repeating the Vedas parrot-like and exploiting Vedanta to fill his own stomach.

Or supposing you are not able to cultivate *kshama*, *santosha* or *vichara*, then at all costs cultivate the association of good people and *jnanis*. You may be an idiot, but if you have a sincere wish to develop and evolve, *sadhu sangama* is the supreme refuge for you. Vasishtha says in another *sloka*:

यः स्नातः शीतसितया साधुसंगमगंगया ।

किं तस्य दानैः किं तीर्थैः किं तपोभिः किमध्वरैः ॥

Yah snaatah seetasitayaa saadhusangamagangayaa,

Kim tasya daanaih kim teerthaih kim tapobhih kimadhwaraih.

“That man, who has taken a dip in the cool fresh waters of the river called *sadhu sangama*, has no necessity at all to do *dana*, charity, go in search of *tirtha* (i.e. on

pilgrimage to holy places), do *tapas* (fasting and other physical austerities), or perform *yaga* and *yajna*. What good (mental purity) he attains by all these, is nothing compared to the good he is deriving from the association with *jnanis*. *Satsanga* purifies you straight."

For us also, the hope of our age is only *satsanga*. Practise *satsanga* assiduously. When you become good yourself, you will meet only good people in this world. The world is not bereft of good people. Had it been so, humanity would not have sustained itself on the face of the earth. It would have met its doom long ago.

I feel sure that most of you would have understood, at least to some extent, what I have tried to convey in these past four weeks. Having heard the talks and understood the fundamentals of Vedanta, do not let it fade away from your minds. Keep the fire of Vedantic thirst burning, by reading good books, hearing good discourses, reflecting over them, analysing with a clean mind, and discussing them over with friends who are similarly disposed. I have told you only those things that our great *acharyas* and *rishis* have handed down to us in the form of the Upanishads, Gita, Yogavasishta and a host of other smaller works. These represent and explain the principles of *sanatana-dharma*. Those great souls have given us the truth about the Ultimate Reality and the way how to realise it, actualise it and become one with it. It is tragic that, in the land of its origin, people are not understanding and making their lives rich, noble and peaceful by reinforcing themselves with this great truth. We are having so many trials and tribulations, be they economical, social, educational and moral, only because, in our lives we are not having the salt of Vedanta, the essence

of Vedanta. Vedanta is a way of living which alone will enrich our life and bring absolute *santi*. Staying right where we are, we can be ennobled and enlightened and have our lives fulfilled. Right in the midst of the worldly life and strife, we can go beyond death, by attaining *Mukti*. Not knowing this secret, we are suffering. In the land of *rishis*, who propounded this truth, lived this truth and attained realisation, in the land where there are still such *rishis*, we now remain steeped in ignorance. Man thinks he is the body-mind-intellect entity and goes on toiling day and night to seek joy from the outside world. Our country is now morally and physically weak, corrupt, cowardly, materially and intellectually famished, all because we have let go the cream of our religion, Vedanta, and are holding on to the empty shell of ritualism and private and public pretensions. Vedanta alone can lift us up from the mire into which we have fallen. In the times of the Mahabharata war the country was facing a similar crisis as now. Vedanta came to the land's rescue, in the form of the Bhagawad Gita. Again, during the times of Sankara, there was a general spiritual decadence in the country. Again, it was Vedanta which stemmed the tide of the calamitous period in our religion's history. Now also Vedanta alone can save the country from going to doom. Our only hope lies in our becoming Vedantins. If ten per cent of our people are Vedantins, our country will become a veritable paradise. If a father is a good Vedantin, his family will imbibe the Vedantic life from him. If in a village there are a dozen people who know, believe in and practise Vedanta, the whole village will become much better and happier, for goodness is as contagious as badness. All want to improve. If you present a good way of life to them in a systematic, easily

understandable way, they will quickly take to it. The country is not lacking in good Vedantins. Each of you become a Vedantin and make the country better. Never forget that everyone of you is a potential *Brahma jnani*. Do not suffer from inferiority complex thinking that you cannot have *jnana*. At the same time do not become puffed up with superiority complex, thinking that you know so much already, that there is no need for you to know more. You are what you are, with the spark of divinity in you. Know that you are part and parcel of the one Infinite Reality. Do not search outside for God but turn inside, for God is as much in you as is outside you. In the *jada padartha* (insentient objects) outside, he is manifesting in a lesser way than in you, where he is manifesting as *chaitanya vastu* (sentient, conscious principle). The only way to trace the Ultimate Reality is by turning within. Dwell upon the Pure Conscionsness. As you progress in this *jnana marga*, (path of knowledge), you may have to go above the religious acts that you have been engaging in hitherto. They are not for you then; outlive them.

Krishna says:

सर्वधर्मान् परित्यज्य मामेकं शरणं व्रज ।

अहं त्वा सर्वपापेभ्यो मोक्षयिष्यामि मा शुचः ॥

*Sarvadharmaan parityajya maamekam saranam vraja,
Aham tvaa sarvapaapebhyo mokshayishyaami maa suchah.*

“Leave away all the *dharma*s, Do’s and Don’ts that have been prescribed by the *sastras* and take refuge in Me, the one Infinite Principle. Such Do’s and Don’ts are intended only for people of *rajo guna* and *tamo guna*, to

control and regulate them. Do not grieve. I will protect you from all sins (the effects of your *karmas*)."

When *Bhagvan* Himself gives you this assurance, why should you fear? Go beyond the rituals and rites, and don't regret that you have to leave them. When a boy has finished his matriculation, he must go to the college for further studies. Does he regret leaving the school and going up? How can he develop and progress intellectually, if out of attachment to the school, he decides to go on studying in the matric class every year? The matric class has served its purpose for him and it will go on serving the same purpose to others junior to him. Similarly, there was nothing wrong in your having practised ritualistic religion so far. You perhaps needed it in your initial stage of religious development. But now you have outgrown it, as your very interest in Vedanta shows. Now outlive it and do not regret that you are throwing away the old religious practices. Even if all of you (Vedantins) throw them away, they are not going to disappear from the face of the earth, for they will be kept alive by the people who are in *rajo guna* and *tamo guna*. As for yourself, proceed to *Mukti* directly through *jnana*. Let the *pooja* room remain for your children, for in the initial stages of religious development, it is often difficult for them to pray or meditate without a picture or an image. Teach them not to have *kamya bhava* (desire) in their prayers, begging God for this and that. Teach them also to sit and meditate at least for a few minutes, morning and evening. If the father and mother are *jnanis*, the children will also grow up into *jnanis*. If the father and mother are *ajnanis* (ignorant), the children will also be their samples.

Don't build elaborate plans and useless *sankalpas* for the future of the children. Take life as it comes. Turn your vision Godward and turn your children Godward. Make them perfect men and women, masters of themselves, so that they can lead a pure and proper life, contented and serene, whatever may be the *sukha* and *dukkha* coming from outside. People who are not dependent upon others, who do not crave or pine for things of the external world, can be happy, irrespective of their circumstances or the conditions of the world. Living such a perfect life, they can impart the richness and purity of their lives to others. Only if you bring up such children will you have done your duty as father or mother. Develop into *rishis* and *rishipatnis* and bring up your children to be the same. As soon as they are sufficiently grown-up, teach them the Gita and such other texts. Discuss with them the finer and nobler aspects of life and create an interest in them for the study of Vedanta. Make them build up their lives on the principles of Vedanta and *sanatana dharma*. There is nothing as purificatory, as cleansing and as elevating, as Vedanta. Mahatma Gandhi used to say that the Gita was verily his mother, the succour of his life.

The very name Bhagawad Gita (the Divine Song) is significant. We are weighed down by the world and invariably have a melancholy countenance. Bhagawad Gita not only removes this melancholy but makes us actually dance with joy, when we realise that "I am not this miserable, limited, conditioned entity, consisting of the body, mind and intellect but the Ever Pure, Ever Blissful *satchidananda*." What else can make us dance with joy but this song celestial. Read this

Divine Song again and again, go deep into it, analyse it and assimilate it in your life. Meditate on the Pure Consciousness and attain *Brahma jnana*. It is said that even the worst type of people, if they take to *jnana nishta* and meditation sincerely, can become *jnanis* in twelve years. The second grade of men, men of *rajo guna*, can by meditation attain *Brahma jnana* in six to nine years, whereas the people of *satva guna* need only about three years for it. You all can and must attain *Brahma jnana*, if you lead a Vedantic life and do meditation. Be definite about it. Change your mental attitude towards life and the world. Change, when the change is possible. Change, for the change will bring you direct happiness. Change, for this change alone will lead you to eternal and everlasting Bliss, *satchidananda*.

May you all Realise!

Chapter 20

MISCELLANEOUS

(a) *Emerson's Poem:*

Emerson, in a poem says:

“I stay my haste, I make delays
For what avails this eager pace?
I stand amidst eternal ways,
And what is mine, shall know my face.”

How right he is! What is the use of all your feverish and mad mundane activities? Can they ever give you peace of mind? Isn't there a higher, better and nobler way of life? Do not waste your life chasing worthless things and achieving only more and more of agitations and worries in the mind. Already anarchy prevails within and to an extent without. Don't increase it. Take yourself above *sukha* and *dukkha*. Fix your aim in life as attaining *Mukti*. Teach your children this and not how to amass wealth alone. Recognise the higher principles that sustain the world and our individual life and learn to live in tune with them. Maintain peace and poise always.

(b) *What next? What is the use?*

Arjuna was no better than ourselves and that was the reason why the Gita was discoursed to him. It was not given to Dharmaputra, because he already knew Vedanta

and was living a *dharmic* life. It was not given to Nakula and Sahadeva, because they were good souls. It was not even given to Bhima, as although apparently he was a glutton, he was yet a pure soul. Arjuna was on the other hand proud and conceited, conscious of his prowess and passionate in his actions, with an element of natural goodness added to his personality. Vedanta is meant chiefly for *rajo gunatmik*as (people of *rajo guna*). Why does Vedanta appeal to the Americans and Europeans? Because they are *rajasik*. They are satiated with worldly things, but not satisfied. There is a spiritual vacuum in them, in spite of all their material comforts. Recently a *sannyasin* had been to Sweden, where people have enough of material possessions, with begging practically unknown, and life very secure and comfortable. The *sannyasin* gave talks over the radio and he was amazed at the way people took to Vedanta. All this clearly goes to prove that material prosperity alone will not give peace of mind. Unless strengthened and purified by spirituality, it in itself is terrible and dangerous.

Sankara says:

लब्धा विद्या राजमान्या ततः किं
 प्राप्ता संपत् प्राभवाद्या ततः किं ।
 भुक्ता नारी सुंदरांगी ततः किं
 येन स्वात्मा नैव साक्षात्कृतोऽभूत् ॥

Labdhaa vidyaa raajamaanyaa tatah kim
Praaptaa sampat praabhavaadhyaa tatah kim
Bhuktaa naree sundaraangee tatah kim
Yena swaatmaa naiva saakshaatkritobhoot.

“You may be well educated; may have got high sounding degrees recognised by governments. What of it? What is the use? *Tatah kim*—What next? You get a job, amass wealth and lead a life of luxury. Are you satisfied? What is the use of all these? You may enjoy life with a beautiful and loving wife, yet what of that? What next?”

केयूराद्यैर्भूषितो वा ततः किं
 कौशेयाद्यैरावृतो वा ततः किं ।
 तृप्तो मृष्टान्नादिना वा ततः किं
 येन स्वात्मा नैव साक्षात्कृतोऽभूत् ॥

Keyooraadyairbhooshito vaa tatah kim
Kauseyaadyairavrito vaa tatah kim,
Tripto mrishtaannadinaa vaa tatah kim
Yena swaatvaa naiva sakshaatkritobhoot.

“You feed on the choicest of foods and increase the size of your tummy. Your stomach becomes bigger than your chest. What is the use? What next? What is the use again of ornamenting your body with nice bracelets and decorating it with silks and other clothes of charming colours? To that man who has not realised his Self, what is the use of having all these things? He will be a miserable creature, in spite of these things, if he does not have *Atma jnana*.”

दृष्टा नाना चारुदेशास्ततः किं
 पुष्टाश्चेष्टा बन्धुवर्गास्ततः किं ।
 नष्टं दारिद्र्यादि दुःखं ततः किं
 येन स्वात्मा नैव साक्षात्कृतोऽभूत् ॥

Drishtaa naanaa chaarudesastatah kim
Pushtaascheshtaa bandhuvargaastatah kim
Nashtam daaridryaadi dukkham tatah kim
Yena swaatmaa naiva sakshaatkritobhoot.

“You go and see different places, countries and beautiful towns. You earn well and provide for all your relations and family. You do away with poverty. Are you satisfied? What next? What is the use?”

स्नातस्तीर्थे जह्नुजादौ ततः किं
दानं दत्तं द्यष्ट्यसंख्यं ततः किं ।
जप्ता मन्त्राः कोटिशो वा ततः किं
येन स्वात्मा नैव साक्षात्कृतोऽभूत् ॥

Snaatasteerthe jahnujaadau tatah kim
Daanam dattam dvyashtyasankhyam tatah kim,
Japtaa mantraah kotiso vaa tatah kim
Yena swaatmaa naiva saakshaatkritobhoot.

“To those who have not realised, is there any use of all such things? You go on a pilgrimage to Ganges, Rishikesh and other holy places: Are you satisfied? What is the use of such actions? You earn in crores and give away in charity thousands. Are you satisfied? What is the use of such actions? Only your ego will be puffed up, if not purified and perfected by *jnana*. You go on repeating *mantras* crores and crores of times. What is the use, if you cannot have abiding *ananada*, by realising your own *Atma*?” You may do *yagas* and *yajnas*. What is the use? Even in the period of *Ramayana*, when the *rishis* were performing *yajnas*, the *rakshasas* came and ate

them up. The *rishis* had to approach Rama to protect them. *Yajnas* and *yagas* do not alleviate the miseries of human beings. Your name and fame may spread throughout the world. Others may come and extol you. In spite of all that, are you happy? What next? These will not give you lasting *ananda*. You may do *pranayaama* and *pratyahara* and acquire supernatural powers. What is the use? Be seated in *Brahman*, that alone will give you peace.

A man once came to Ramakrishna Paramahansa and said that after doing *tapas* for a number of years, he had got the power of walking over water. Ramakrishna replied that his *tapas* was worth only one anna, as that was the fare for crossing the river! My own *guru* was an engineer, and indulged in magic. One day he was reading the pulse of a man to understand his thoughts, when a *sannyasin* came, stared at him and walked away. Immediately my *guru* found that all his magical powers would not work. He went after the *sannyasin* and asked him why his powers had left him. The *sannyasin* picked up a seed and said: "Do you know the magic in this seed that makes it grow into a giant tree? Do you know the magician behind the world? First know the magician of magicians." He was then duly initiated in *Brahma vidya* and became a realised soul subsequently.

(c) *Sajjana and Durjana.*

Bhartrihari, in a beautiful *sloka*, gives the signs of a *sajjana*—good man. Teach this *sloka* to your children with meaning and let them dwell upon the meaning often. You can be definite that they will in due course become good people,

वांछा सज्जनसंगमे परगुणे प्रीतिगुरौ नम्रता
 विद्यायां व्यसनं स्वयोषिति रतिर्लोकापवादाद्भयम् ॥
 भक्तिशूलिनि शक्तिरात्मदमने संसर्गमुक्तिः खले-
 ष्वेते येषु भवन्ति निर्मलगुणास्तेभ्यो नरेभ्यो नमः ॥

*Vaanchhaa sajjanasangame para-
 gune preetirgurau namrataa,
 Vidyaayaam vyasanam svayoshiti rati-
 rlokaapavaadaadbhayam.
 Bhaktisoolini saktitraatmadamane
 samsargamuktih khale-
 Shwete yeshu bhavanti nirmala-
 gunaastebhyo narebhyo namah.*

“I prostrate before those people who are desirous of associating with good people; who are happy in the virtues of others (some people are jealous of the good qualities of others and always try to pull them down to their own level; instead, one should be happy and emulate the man who has virtuous qualities); who respect their *gurus* (they do not argue unnecessarily with them but learn or acquire knowledge—both *para* and *apara vidya*—with effort, struggle and application. Only during the first thirty years of life, one can learn easily. Therefore, without wasting time and running about hither and thither one should, with application, acquire knowledge); who observe *ekapatnivrata*, if they are married, or who observe *Brahmacharya*, if not married; who act in this world in such a way that no blemish is cast on them by the people; who are devoted to God; who have cultivated will-power

by *indriya niyamana* and who do not associate with bad people.”

Bhartrihari has also written a verse on the traits that mark a bad man, *durjana*:

अकरुणत्वमकारणविग्रहः
परधने परयोषिति च स्पृहा ।
सुजनबन्धुजनेष्वसहिष्णुता
प्रकृतिसिद्धमिदं हि दुरात्मनाम् ॥

Akarunatwamakaaranavigrahaḥ
Paradhane parayoshiti cha sprihaa,
Sujanabandhujaneshwasahishnuta
Prakritisiddhamidam hi duraatmanaam.

“Who is a *duratma* or *durjana*? He is one who has no *karuna*, sympathy, or regard for others. (*Karuna* is love expressed through one’s actions.) He will pick up quarrels with others without any reason or cause. (A friend may pass an innocent remark about him, which this man will take in a wrong sense, and start quarrelling.) If he sees a rich man, he feels jealous and covetous. He is sensuous and is attracted towards *parastree* (i.e. any woman if he is unmarried and women other than his wife if he is married.) If he sees a *jnani* or a wise man, he cannot tolerate him. If any of his friends or relatives wants to become a *jnani* or walks the path of Vedanta, he (the *duratma*), will criticise him, ridicule him and try to pull him down to his own level. The *buddhi*, intellect which ought to be utilised by him to evolve, he uses to degrade himself further and to become worse than an animal. He would be intolerant of the good counsel of

his friends and benefactors. These are the characteristics of a *durjana*, a bad, wicked man."

Whether we are good or bad, whether we belong to the first category or the second, whatever stage of evolution we may be in, we can still use our *buddhi* to ascend higher in the scale of evolution. It does not matter at all even if we are utterly bad. We can still come up with the help of our *buddhi*. Valmiki was the dacoit Ratnakara. Once he was convinced that his life was degrading and that there was a life much higher, much nobler, he mended his ways immediately and became the great poet and *jnani*, Valmiki. Are we worse than Ratnakara? No.

If your *buddhi* is governed by the mind which in its turn is ruled over by the senses, understand you are going down fast. If, on the other hand, the *buddhi*, detaching itself from the body and mind, attaches itself to the *Atman*, it can evolve quickly. For, it will then control the mind and the body.

(d) *Competence to realise:*

I want to say something about the fitness of people to realise. Many people have been asking me: "Swamiji, am I fit for Vedanta? Can I have *jnana*?" etc: I tell you again and again: "If you want to have *jnana* and attain *Moksha*, it is not difficult at all." All that is needed is an inner change. If you are capable of thinking, "I am a man, limited by my circumstances", equally capable are you of thinking, "I am the master of my circumstances." Anyone who thinks, "I am not happy in this *samsara*. I am only having misery here. I want to have permanent joy," can, if he has *buddhi* and is sincere, aim at and attain *Moksha*. Then who are the people not fit for *Moksha*?

Upanishads say:

नायमात्मा बलहीनेन लभ्यः ॥

Naayamaatmaa balaheenena labhyah.

“Only weaklings and cowards, who have not enough courage and capacity to stand on their own feet and rely upon themselves, are unfit to attain *Mukti*.”

Depend upon yourself. Cowardice is not our heritage. Why are the youngsters of today so weak, so lacking in self-confidence? Because the parents are not bringing them up properly. They do not teach their children the right sense of values. Instead of telling them, “Have faith in your own self. Do not depend upon your flesh and muscles. There is a higher power within you. There is Divinity within you. You will not be betrayed if you depend on That,” they provide dresses that are showy and help them cover their weakness and ignorance with ostentation. Instead of asking them to seek God, they ask them to go after money, by adopting any means. How will the children improve?

Our culture teaches us that if the soul-principle in man is taken care of, then all the other principles in him will automatically be perfected. It is like pouring water at the root. Then the water is carried to every part of the tree. On the other hand, if you water the branches, the tree is bound to dry up. We have forgotten our ancient traditions. In neglecting to provide our children with spiritual wisdom, and by giving them only secular education, we are nicely watering the braches, but unwittingly letting the tree dry up.

What is religion? It is not a mere doing of formal rituals. Religion must make you noble and perfect. If

you are not a perfect man, take it that you are not religious. You need not believe in God. But believe in yourself, believe in the Divinity within you. We are not having a correct understanding of God.

Take for instance the Ganapati *pooja* we perform. We make a small ball of turmeric and say:

अस्मिन् हरिद्राबिम्बे विघ्नेश्वरं महागणपतिं आवाहयामि ।

Asmin haridraabimbe Vighnesvaram Mahaaganapatim aavaahayaami.

“In this turmeric ball, I am bringing down and putting Lord Ganapati.” Then we perform *pooja*, offer fruits, *payas*, etc., and then finally say:

अस्मात् हरिद्राबिम्बात् महागणपतिं यथास्थानं प्रतिष्ठापयामि ।

Asmaat haridraabimbaat Mahaaganapatim yathaasthaanam pratishtaapayaami.

“I am taking Lord Ganapati away from this turmeric ball and putting him where he was before”, i. e. we are bringing Mahaganapati from within ourselves into the turmeric ball and then putting him back again where he was. If our mind is capable of bringing and seating Mahaganapati where we like, is our mind stronger or Mahaganapati stronger? Just think!

If the religion we practise is a true one, it must make us proper men. It must teach us to have faith in ourselves. It must instil into us the idea, “You are not the body, you are not the mind, there is Divinity within you and That you are.” Vedanta repeatedly tells us to find the God within ourselves. Instead of doing that, we have imprisoned ourselves in our imaginations and are

groping in a maze of meaningless rituals. Just like removing an aching tooth, anything bad has to be thrown away without sentiments. We have to outlive the formal shows.

Another thing we lack badly is ethical perfection. Some people may seem to be ethical, but mostly they are so because of fear. Cowardice makes them ethical. To what plight has cowardice brought us to? Our children tremble when they go for examinations or interviews. Vedanta tries to make a strong man of you. It tells you "Go beyond fear, *raga* and *dwesha*." It aims at making man Godly, which is his true nature. So, have no more doubts as to whether you can have *jnana*. You can have it and you can attain the Supreme, if you have courage and determination. *Paurusha* alone can assist us in this. *Paurusha* is not fighting so many people single-handed or amassing wealth by doing dishonest business. It is removing our *raga*, *dwesha* and *bhaya*.

Bhagawan says:

वीतरागभयक्रोधा मन्मया मामुपाश्रिताः ।

बहवो ज्ञानतपसा पूता मद्भावमागताः ॥

Veetaraagabhayakrodhaa manmayaa maamupaasritaah,
Bahavo jnaanatapasaa pootaa madbhaavamaagataah.

"Many people are attaining Me, the Infinite, purifying themselves through *jnana tapas*. They ever remain attuned to me, by transcending *raga*, *bhaya* and *kroda*."

He who is rid of attachment, fear and anger is called a man of wisdom, *sthitadhi*. So get rid of fear. Fear arises only because of the feeling that the world is sepa-

rate from you. The moment you recognise that you, as well as the world, are expressions of the same Infinite Reality, your fear will disappear.

Take refuge in the Ultimate Reality, *Atman*, seated within yourself. Make a firm decision that "I must attain that non-perishable *satchidananda*, that Ultimate Reality. That is my goal in life. Any other thing is secondary." Determine that you will transcend your lower nature and impulses and realise the Real Self. According to Krishna:

महात्मानस्तु मां पार्थ दैवीं प्रकृतिमाश्रिताः ।
भजन्त्यनन्यमनसो ज्ञात्वा भूतादिमव्ययम् ॥

*Mahaatmaanastu maam Paartha
daiveem prakritimaasritaah,
Bhajantyananyamanaso
jnaatvaa bhootaadimavyayam.*

"Who is a Mahatma? Not a showy Vedantin nor a man who is famous throughout the world. A Mahatma is one whose lower self has been conquered by his higher Self. He is a Mahatma, who has used his wisdom and intellect to kill his lower nature and whose sole aim is to attain the *mahatswaroopa*. Such Mahatmas have *daivi prakriti*, divine nature, born out of the knowledge that "the Infinite Reality and I are one." They will be devoted to *jnana* and will realise *Brahman*, as *Brahman* is the ultimate cause of the Universe."

Sankara says:

ईश्वरानुग्रहादेव पुंसामद्वैतवासना ॥

Isvaraanugrahaadeva pumsaamadvaitavaasanaa,

“Take it that you have been showered with the choicest blessings of the Infinite *sarvesvara*, if you have any interest in *advaita* philosophy and *jnana nishta* .”

I have been talking on a subtle (I am not one who will call Vedanta “dry”) subject with no stories and jokes to entertain you; yet you came and listened because there is an innate thirst in you to evolve and perfect yourselves. This thirst cannot but lead you to *Moksha*. Be sure about it. Have no more doubts as to whether you can attain *jnana*. If you want it, you can get it. If you do not want it, even Gods cannot help you.

हरो यद्युपदेष्टा ते हरिः कमलजोपि वा
तथापि न तव स्वास्थ्यं सर्वविसरणादृते ॥

*Haro yadyupadeshtaa te Harih kamalajopi vaa,
Tathaapi na tava swaasthyam sarvavismaranaadrite.*

“Even if Siva, Brahma or Vishnu comes physically in front of you and says, ‘I am your *guru*’ and gives you *upadesa*, you will still have no *jnana* and peace. You will have to forget yourself, your mind and your *guru* included, to reach that state.” Each one of you can attain it, if you but have the yearning.

(e) *The best place for sadhana:*

There is a famous Sanskrit *sloka*:

वनेपि दोषाः प्रभवन्ति रागिणाम्
गृहेपि पञ्चेन्द्रियनिग्रहस्तपः ।
अकुत्सिते कर्मणि यः प्रवर्तते
निवृत्तरागस्य गृहं तपोवनम् ॥

*Vanepi doshaah prabhavanti raaginaam
 Grihepi panchendriya-niggrahastapah,
 Akutsite karmani yah pravartate
 Nivrittaraagasya griham tapovanam.*

“O man, who is not rid of *raga* and *dwesha*, if you run away to the jungle, thinking that to be an ideal place for *sadhana*, you will find the very same *raga* and *dwesha* there also. So, be seated in your own house and controlling the *indriyas* with a mind which has grasped the Vedantic truth, work on in the world. If one is able to work in such a way, with this changed mental attitude, his own house becomes a *tapovana* (an ideal place for meditation and penance.)”

There are six enemies within us, viz. *kama*, *krodha*, *lobha*, *moha*, *mada*, *matsarya* (desire, anger, greed, ignorance, intolerance and prejudices.) These can be summed up as *raga* and *dwesha*. Anybody knowing these enemies and wanting to win over them should fight them in his own house. Do not fight them in the open. Have a fortress with a stockpile of ammunition inside and shoot the enemies from a vantage point. When these enemies are annihilated, when their strength is gone, let the wise man then wander anywhere. No more will he be troubled by these enemies.

In the initial stages, the best place for *sadhana* is your own house. Close the doors of your room, burn some incense and do meditation. In your own house, your wife or mother will give you food. If you go to a cave, food is not easily available. Hence, instead of meditating on *Brahman*, you will be meditating on food. By going to the jungle, therefore, you cannot get rid of your base

tendencies. For some time they may be dormant, but at the first opportunity they will express themselves by virulently jumping into the open. After controlling *raga* and *dwesha*, become a *sannyasin* or a *samsarin*, as you like. When I was initiated, I wanted to become a *sannyasin* immediately. Our *guruji* said: “*Sannyasa* is not a purchasable commodity. You just sit and do *tapas*. Find cosmos in chaos. If you do not find peace first where you live, you will not find it in the jungle either. If you assume *sannyasa* before attaining this inner equipoise, repudiate me, refuse to call me your *guru*.” For ten years he made me do intense *tapas*. In the morning I used to be busy with my office, but the night was free time. If a man is very sincere, although he may not get time during the day, he can practise contemplation in the night. Read the *sastras*, Upanishads, *Brahmasutras* and the Gita. These are available with translation in English and other Indian languages now. Two hundred years ago you could not have got these books.

Some people complain that the present times are bad and that their grandfathers' time was good. I don't think so. At best, people then had some good qualities, but they did not have much of Vedanta in them. They had also their vices. Most of them had a *dharma patni* and a mistress or two apart. Compared to them, our present day youngsters are far better. In my opinion, the present times are the fittest for those who want to pursue the Vedantic life. I consider that anybody born now is very lucky.

Some friends complained to me (jockingly?) that their wives, after hearing my lectures, are no longer religiously obedient to them! It seems, they have started

asserting that they have equal competency for attaining *Brahma jnana* and that they might attain it even before their husbands!! I remarked that it was a very good sign. If you are sick and your wife takes medicine, will you be cured? If your wife is sick and you take the medicine, can she recover from her illness? Whoever is sick has to take the medicine to get cured. If your wife is having the *prapanchika* disease (disease of worldiness), then she has to take the medicine of Vedanta herself. Do not think that if you are religious, a divine current will pass from you to your wife and enable her to attain *Mukti*. Each has to act and attain independently.

Anyone, in any walk of life can attain *Brahma jnana*, if he or she has a sincere aspiration and a steadfast will. Nobody is barred—by caste, colour, creed, status or sex. Do not think that you have to run away to the jungles for the attainment of *Brahma jnana*. The place where you are at present living and working, is the fittest place for practising Vedanta. Vedanta can be practised in the offices, in our kitchens, nay, even in our bathrooms and lavatories.

(f) *The State of Realisation.*

Man's main obstacle to realisation is his *dwaita bhava* and a mistaken notion about what is real and unreal. He thinks: "I am the body, mind and intellect. I am one. The other beings are different from me. The world is objective to me. I am limited by my body," etc. This is at the root of all his selfishness. However much one says that "you are not the body," the identification of oneself with the body, mind, etc., will take time to get eradicated. But once you are in *samadhi*, the body consciousness goes away completely. Your eyes are really

opened only when you are dead to the world by merging with the Ultimate, Infinite Reality. And even this *nirvikalpa samadhi* is not the final state to be attained, for there are chances, that once you come out of the *samadhi*, your *raga* and *dwesha* will once again make their presence felt, though only slightly. If even after attaining the *samadhi* state, you are the old person, i.e. you are having the same *raga* and *dwesha*, is there any benefit derived at all from the *samadhi* state? This is a very pertinent question. Even after *samadhi*, it is possible that your *raga* and *dwesha* may not be completely gone, but you must go on meditating and cultivating *samabhava*, till the *visvatmabhava* becomes a constant awareness in you. This is called the *sahaja* state and the ultimate state to be attained. This is the real *Brahma jnana*, whereas the *nirvikalpa* state is the *Atma jnana*. It takes a little time for one to attain the *Brahmi sthiti* even after the *nirvikalpa sthiti*. But once you attain the *Brahmi sthiti*, even meditation stops. You will come to a state where the thought that "I must attain *Moksha*" will go away, for the personality which wanted *Moksha* would have been annihilated. However much one describes this state, you will not be able to understand it fully, unless you yourself experience it. Till then, it will be like a blind man trying to picture the form of an elephant.

(g) *Hypnotism and Samadhi:*

Some people ask me whether *samadhi* is not self-induced hypnotism.

In hypnotism, the hypnotised man is of a weak mind and the hypnotiser has some mental power. The hypnotiser draws the attention of the person by some gestures and asking him to count one, two, three, etc. Thus, when

a receptive attitude is evoked in the subject, the hypnotiser suggests that the person is going to sleep, that he is overwhelmed by sleep and so on. The hypnotised man, being one of weak will-power, succumbs to the suggestion of the hypnotiser and sleeps. In hypnotism we are brought down from our original mental level. When we come back to the conscious state, there is no change at all in our personality; rather there is a weakening of the mental faculties.

In *samadhi*, you leave the external things, even the mentation and retreat within and are one with the pure Infinite Consciousness. Your personality expands and assumes universal proportions. You become the Infinite. If one leaves the sense and intellect-realms and sinks in *samadhi*, pure consciousness, he gets purified and strengthened all round. All the weaknesses and imperfections go away.

For sceptics, I will read out Einstein's views given in the book, *The Universe and Dr. Einstein*, by Lincoln Barnett:

"The most beautiful and the most profound emotion we can experience is the sensation of the mystical". (Western philosophers have no suitable word to describe the subjective or *samadhi* experience. So they use the word "emotion". "Mystical" here means something beyond the mind.)

"It is the source of all true science!" If you go beyond the mind and catch the truth intuitively there, from that alone, real science originates.

"He to whom this emotion is a stranger, who can no longer wonder and stand rapt in awe, is as good as dead." Vedanta also says that those people who are not able to

understand the Ultimate Reality, are as good as dead. (He goes from death to death.)

मृत्योः स मृत्युमाप्नोति ॥

Mrityoh sa mrityumaapnoti.

“To know that what is impenetrable to us really exists, manifesting itself as the most radiant beauty (referring to *satchidananda*) which our dull faculties can comprehend only in the most primitive forms—THIS KNOWLEDGE is the centre of true religiousness. The cosmic religious experience (*samadhi*) is the strongest and noblest mainspring of scientific research.”

By *jnana samadhi*, the perspicuity of the senses increases. When you look at a thing, you can go to the very core of it. When you hear a thing, you can understand it easily. The sense organs are no longer gross, they become subtle, strengthened, sublimated and sharpened. The grasping power and memorising capacity of the mind increase. The intellecting capacity of the intellect increases. In short, your personality is perfected and purified.

Compared to that great awakening, *Brahma jnana*, even the lordship of the earth and heaven falls into utter insignificance.

By contrast, in hypnotism, you are brought down from your existing mental level. Your intellect is benumbed. Many Western psychologists, who cannot conceive of *samadhi*, have conjectured and speculated about it, calling it as induced hypnotism, a special conditioned reflex, etc. So, do not be carried away by the second-hand opinion of the Westerners and their oriental duplicates, but gain a first hand experience and see for yourself.

(h) *Going to Temples:*

When we go to temples, the atmosphere there, namely, the chanting of *mantras*, ringing of bells, burning of incense, smell of fresh flowers and sandalwood, etc., temporarily reduce the extrovert tendencies of our minds and thus bring about an element of equanimity and joy. For the time being we go beyond the *rajasik* and *tamasik* realms and enter the *satvik* realm of the mind.

But temples cannot take us beyond the *satvik* realm. Vedanta says, if we are to attain *Mukti*, we have to transcend the *satvik* realm also. Bhagawan says in the Gita:

सत्त्वात् संजायते ज्ञानं रजसो लोभ एव च ।

प्रमादमोहौ तमसो भवतोऽज्ञानमेव च ॥

Satvaat samjaayate jnanam rajaso lobha eva cha,

Pramaadamohau tamaso bhavatojnaanameva cha.

“If you transcend *tamas* and *rajas* and come to *satva*, that is the gateway through which we enter *jnana*.”

So our *poojas* and temples will at best, if you know the right method of worship, help us to come to *satva guna*, that is all.

त्रैगुण्यविषया वेदा निस्त्रैगुण्यो भवार्जुन ।

निर्द्वन्द्वो नित्यसत्त्वस्थो निर्योगक्षेम आत्मवान् ॥

Traigunnyavishayaa vedaa nishtraigunnyo bhavaarjuna,

Nirdwandwo nityasatwastho niryogakshema aatmavaan.

“You have to become *nishtraigunya*, go beyond the three *gunas*.”

Vedanta never says: “Do *pooja*” or “Do not do *pooja*.” It only says: “For *Mukti*, this is not the direct way. *Jnana marga* is the direct way.”

Krishna tells Arjuna in the Gita:

ईश्वरः सर्वभूतानां हृद्देशेऽर्जुन तिष्ठति ।

भ्रामयन्सर्वभूतानि यन्त्रारूढानि मायया ॥

Iswarah sarvabhootaanaam hriddeserjuna tishthati,

Bhraamayansarvabhootaani yantraaroodhaani maayuyaa.

“God is enthroned at the seat of consciousness in each and every individual. *Hridaya* means not the physical heart, but the seat of consciousness, wherefrom thoughts emanate. Take refuge in that God seated in your heart, in that consciousness, with *sarvabhava*, in each and every way that is possible for you. By dwelling in that inner spirit alone, will you have peace”.

(i) *Yajna, Dana and Tapa:*

We go on mechanically doing the rituals and chanting the *mantras* thinking them to be great and without knowing the meaning and without even caring to know the meaning. We are hugging on to superstitions handed down to us by our parents and grandparents in the name of our Dharma.

Take the Gita for example. It is such a masterly study of life in this world and gives us the best techniques for evolving and elevating ourselves. Yet how many people read it, study it, penetrate into it and know its purport to enlighten and enrich themselves? Alas! Many people do *parayana* (daily reading) of it, without knowing the meaning of even half a dozen words.

The best rituals prescribed by the *rishis* for men of all times are *yajna*, *dana* and *tapa*. This was the essence of their teachings, but we have thrown away the kernel and

are hugging on to the shell. You will be true to the Vedas only if you do the essential *yajna*, *dana* and *tapa* sincerely, throughout your life.

Anything done for reaching God, which will purify the doer in the process, is *yajna*. *Yajna* is also helping others by thought, by word and by deed. You must be willing to go out of your way to help others, even if it entails inconvenience to you. Let your heart melt at the suffering of others.

Dana means charity. Help those who are needy, even if you have to suffer because of that.

Tapa is to have control over your senses and mind. Meditation is the highest *tapas*.

These are the things on which we should base our life and not on rituals which have lost their meaning in the present day circumstances.

(j) *Kaliyuga Mantras*:

The *kaliyuga mantras* for expiation of all sins are—"Excuse me; I am sorry; Pardon me", etc. These are highly medicated pills of hypocrisy.

You step on a man's toe with your iron-heeled shoes and when he yelis in pain, you insincerely say, "Excuse me, I am sorry" and walk off without a further tinge of sympathy or regret. It is really unfortunate that in our land of *rishis* and *mahatmas*, insincerity and hypocrisy are gaining a prominent place. If a young man has these two qualities, he is regarded by many as a 'bright' man having a 'promising future.' Alas, what a fall, my countrymen!

I have culled from the Gita certain *adhyatmic mantras* which, if you remember or repeat, will enable you to face life's onslaught courageously and calmly. These *mantras*

are highly purificatory and will help and strengthen you at times of distress and trial.

(1) धीरस्तत्र न मुह्यति ।

Dheerastatra na muhyati.

“A courageous man is not deluded by the ups and downs of life, the *sukhas* and *dukkhas*.”

(2) तान् तितिक्षस्व भारत ।

Taan titikshasva Bhaarata.

“Sustain whatever onslaughts you meet in life; sustain *sukha* and *dukkha*.”

(3) समदुःखसुखं धीरं सोऽमृतत्वाय कल्पते ।

Samadukkhasukham dheeram somritatvaaya kalpate.

“That courageous man alone is fit for immortality who is equanimous in joy and sorrow, who is able to keep up inner *Sama bhava*.”

(4) नाभिनन्दति न द्वेष्टि ।

Naabhinandati na dweshti.

“An equanimous man is neither overjoyed at fortune, nor disappointed at misfortune. He neither hails nor hates.”

Whenever you have troubles, if you remember the first *mantra*, immediately you will have the courage to be equanimous. When a physical pain is there, let the body weep, but keep up the inner poise. When you closely analyse pain and pleasure, you will find that they are mere feelings, and feeling is awareness. Awareness is consciousness which is a thought-projection on the infinite consciousness. So when a pain comes, a *jnani* will trace it to the Infinite Consciousness and enjoy the bliss of pain.

Even if the pain is too severe, *titikshasva*, sustain it, by thinking or taking the name of God or doing *anusandhana*, instead of loudly wailing. In any case you will have to sustain the pain; why not bear it, remembering Sarveswara? Sustain it through *Samabhava*.

(k) *Prayer:*

Our present day prayers can rightly be called as beggings and supplications. Not only do we beg of God to give us this and that, but what is worse, we coax him with bribes. It has become a regular feature for parents to tempt God with coconuts, sweetmeats and what not, for the success of their children in examinations, in getting admission to colleges, securing lucrative jobs and getting good marriage alliances! All parents invariably pray that their son or daughter should alone be the first in the examination. This would mean that the other children should not get the first place! See what rank selfishness our prayers display!

Our religion is much nobler than the ignorant performances we do in its name. Instead of inculcating good traits like patriotism, courage, fearlessness, truthfulness, non-injury, control of the sense-organs and meditation in the children, we emphasise that they should be only after money! Is it any wonder that they become rank materialists, traitorous and treacherous to their parents and their culture.

Now let us see how our ancient *rishis* prayed. They prayed:

सर्वे जनाः सुखिनो भवन्तु, सर्वे सन्तु निरामयाः ।

सर्वे भद्राणि पश्यन्तु, मा कश्चित् दुःखभाक् भवेत् ॥

*Sarve janaah sukhino bhavantu, sarve santu niraamayaah,
Sarve bhadraani pasyantu maa kaschit dukkhabhaak bhavet.*

“O God! (it is the One Infinite God and not Rama or Krishna), let everybody in this world be happy. Let none have any misery or trouble. Let everybody come across only good things (i. e. let everybody have success). Let none experience sorrow”.

As regards praying for oneself, the prayers were:

असतो मा सद् गमय
 तमसो मा ज्योतिर्गमय
 मृत्योर्मा अमृतं गमय
 ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ॥

Asato maa sadgamaya
Tamaso maa jyotirgamaya
Mrityormaa amritam gamaya
Om santih santih santih.

“O Infinite God, take me, lead me from *asat*, the ephemeral, the transient and the changing, to *sat*, the non-changing, permanent abode of *Brahman*. Lead me from darkness to light i. e. ignorance to real knowledge. Lead me from this *Samsara*, with its repeated births and deaths to *Mukti*, the state of birthlessness and deathlessness, *nitya satchidananda*.” This is the mind-elevating prayer of a *sanatana dharmi* and not the craving, selfish prayers we normally chant or repeat. There are only circular motions in the universe, no straight motions. See the way the Sun, stars and planets move. Thoughts also issue out and come back to you after circling the universe. The prayers cited above will purify you and help others in their circling errand.

THE END

GLOSSARY

[The words are printed in the order of the Sanskrit alphabet]

Ajnana—Ignorance

Ajnani—An ignorant man

Adharma—Unrighteousness

Adharmi—An unrighteous man

Antahkarana—The inner equipment consisting of the mind
and intellect

Antaryami—The indwelling spirit or soul

Abhyasa—Practice through repetition

Avidya—Ignorance, nescience

Avyakta—Unmanifest

Asat—Unreal

Ahamkara—The ego

Ahambodha—"I"—consciousness

Atmatatva—The knowledge pertaining to the Self or the
Soul

Atmajnana—Realisation of the Self

Atma—The Soul

Adhidaivika—Relating to invisible causes, brought on by
fate

Adhibhoutika—Relating to or brought on by the elements,
animals etc.

Adhyatmika—Relating to the soul or spirit, caused by the
mind

Ananda—Bliss

Avarana—Covering

Indriya—Organ

Indriya Niyamana—Control of the sense organs

Rishi—Sage

Ekapatnivrata—The principle of keeping to one wife alone

- Karma*—Action or movement
Karmabandha—Bondage acquired through action
Karma yoga—The *yoga* of action
Karmi—One attached to actions and their fruits
Kshetra—The field (the body)
Kshetrajna—The knower of the field viz. the Soul
Guna—Quality, any of the three traits basic in man
Guru—Teacher, preceptor
Chitta—Mind and intellect
Chaitanya—Sentience
Jada—Inert, insentient
Jijnasu—One who has a wish to know the Ultimate Reality
Jivanmukti—Release from the bondage of life
Jnana—Knowledge
Jnani—A man of knowledge
Jnana yoga—The *yoga* of knowledge
Tatva—Truth, principle
Tapas—Penance, austerity
Tamas—Sloth—the third of the three *gunas*
Tapatraya—The threefold misery to which man is subject,
 viz. *adhidaivika*, *adhibhoutika* and *adhyatmika*
Dukkha—Misery, unhappiness
Deha—Body
Dehi—One who resides in the body, viz. *Atma* or the Soul
Drik—The seer
Drisya—The seen
Dweshā—Aversion, repulsion
Dharma—Righteousness
Dharmi—A righteous person
Naraka—Hell
Nasvara—Impermanent, transient
Namajapa—Repetition of Divine names

Nigraha—Suppression

Nididhyasana—Contemplative meditation

Nirvikalpa samadhi—Superconscious awakening

Papa—Sin

Papin—Sinner

Pativratya—The steadfast loyalty and devotion to one's
own husband

Punya—Meritorious deed

Pooja—Worship

Paurusha—Manliness, will-power

Prapancha—The world here and the worlds hereafter

Prarabdha—Fate, the effect of the past *karmas*

Buddhi—Intellect

Brahman—The Ultimate Reality

Brahma jnana—The realisation of Brahman

Brahma nishta—The discipline and technique for attaining
Brahman

Brahmanubhuti—The experience of Brahman

Bhakti—Devotion

Bhakti yoga—The *yoga* of devotion

Bhaya—Fear

Manana—Cogitation, reflection

Manas—The mind

Mala—Rosary

Mukti }
Moksha } -Liberation from the cycle of births and deaths

Mumukshutva—A keen thirst for Moksha, liberation

Moha—Delusion

Yajna—An act to purify the individual and lead to God

Yaga—Sacrifice

Yoga—Union, Uniting

Rajas—Activity, the second of the three *gunas*

Raga—Attraction

Viveka—Discrimination as to what is real and what is
unreal

Viveki—A man of *Viveka*, discrimination

Viswatma bhava—Cosmic consciousness, the awareness that
the self and the universe are one

Vishaya—An object of the senses

Vaidika karma—Ritualistic act

Vairagya—Dispassion

Vyakta—Tangible, perceptible

Santi—Peace

Sastra—Scripture

Sishya—Disciple, initiate

Sravana—Hearing

Sreyas—That which is of lasting good for one

Satchidananda—The Ultimate Reality which is Pure Existence, Pure Awareness and Pure Bliss

Satta—Reality

Satya—Truth

Satva—Light or brilliance, the first of the three *gunas*

Samabhava—Equanimity, mental poise

Sarvavyapi—All-pervading

Sarvesvara—The lord of all beings, the Dynamic Reality

Sahaja samadhi—Habitual Superconsciousness

Sankalpa—Thought, imagination

Sannyasa—Renunciation

Sannyasin—One who has renounced the world

Samsara sagara—The ocean of worldly life

Sadhana—Spiritual practice

Samkhya yoga—The *yoga* of wisdom

Sukha—Happiness

Sthitaprajna—A man of *Samadhi*, remaining merged in
superconsciousness





